



*Routledge Studies in US Foreign Policy*

# **INDIA-AMERICA RELATIONS (1942–62)**

**ROOTED IN THE LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL ORDER**

Atul Bhardwaj





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# India-America Relations (1942–62)

Examining India-America relations between 1942–62, this book reconsiders the role of America in shaping the imagination of postcolonial India. It rejects a conventional orthodoxy that assigns a limited role to America and challenges narratives which neglect the natural asymmetries and focus on discord and differences to define India-America relations.

Integrating the security, political and economic elements of the Indo-American relationship, it presents a synthesis of India's encounter with the post-war hegemon and looks at the military, economic and political involvement of America during the 'transfer of power' from Britain to India. Bhardwaj delves into the role of American non-government agencies and examines the anti-communist ideological linkages that the Indian political class developed with America, the influence of this bonding and the role of American ideas, experts, funds, international relations and strategy in shaping India's social, economic and educational institutions. Analysing India's non-alignment policy and its linkages to American policy on the non-communist neutrals, it argues that India's movement towards the Soviet Union and away from China in the mid-1950s was in tune with the American strategy to cause the Sino-Soviet split.

The book presents a fresh perspective based on authentic records and adds a new dimension to the understanding of modern Indian history and Indo-American relations. It will appeal to scholars and students of Indian and American history, international relations and strategy.

**Atul Bhardwaj** is a strategic affairs and international affairs analyst. He writes a regular column on strategy in *Economic and Political Weekly*. He is currently an Adjunct Fellow with the Institute of Chinese Studies (ICS),

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Rooted in the Liberal International Order

**Atul Bhardwaj**

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**For my parents, Raksha and Gopal**

# Contents

*Acknowledgements*

*List of abbreviations*

## **1 Introduction**

*The American Century and India*

*The British invite America to India*

*In awe of America*

*The post-war parting*

*Chapters*

## **2 Direct American involvement in India**

*GIs in India*

*Censorship and turf war*

*British propaganda machinery in America*

*Networking with the Indian elite*

*Airlifting Pandit*

*The Drew Pearson Affair*

*Mathai the mole*

*The economics of war*

*India and the Lend-Lease*

*American silver for India*

*Conclusion*

## **3 The New Deal – Indian planning and politics**

*The pre-war ideas*

The post-war package  
American inspiration for Indian planning  
TVA and the Damodar Valley project  
America in Indian rural sector  
The Peace Corps  
The Appleby pill  
Mapping Indian minerals  
The Indian socialists and America  
The libertarian returns from Brussels  
J.P. Narayan, the most trusted ally of America  
Conclusion

#### **4 American philanthropy in India**

Bateson's advice  
Early engagement with the Rockefeller Foundation  
The Ford Foundation  
Penetrating Indian education  
The American Institute of Indian Studies  
The Asia Foundation  
Two tiny but influential American NGOs  
CARE  
Meals for Millions  
Conclusion

#### **5 Diplomatic encounters: asymmetric proximity**

Wheat, weapons and wealth  
Nehru's maiden visit to the USA  
Why no FCN treaty for India?  
The myth of rift  
Asymmetry and proximity  
Nuclear cooperation  
The American aid arrives  
The Kennedy-Cooper rescue act  
Conclusion

#### **6 From Tibet towards war**

The Tibet entanglement

*Tibet lobby in India*

*Ike in India*

*Conclusion*

## **7 1962 war and the Sino-Soviet split**

*India, a credible neutral in Korean crisis*

*India not alone in recognizing China*

*Why Nehru did not intervene in Tibet*

*Rejecting the American offer of a Security Council seat*

*Bandung and beyond*

*Non-alignment was not anti-Americanism*

*Courting and countering the non-communist neutrals*

*Flirting with the Soviet Union*

*War to split*

*Krishna Menon – the fall guy*

*Conclusion*

*Bibliography*

*Index*

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# Abbreviations

ABCD	America, Britain, China and the Dutch East Indies
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AEC	Atomic Energy Commission
AIIS	American Institute of Indian Studies
ATC	Air Transport Command
ATM	American Technical Mission
BCLI	Brussels Congress and the League against Imperialism
CAI	Chinese Army in India
CARE	Cooperative for American Remittances to Everywhere
CBI	China-Burma-India
CCD	Censorship Control Department
CD	Community Development
CEF	Chinese Expeditionary Force
CMPO	Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization
COAS	Chief of Army Staff
COI	Coordination of Information
CPI	Communist Party of India
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
CWC	Congress Working Committee
DRS	Democratic Research Service
EAD	External Affairs Department
ECC	Economic Committee of Cabinet
FCN	Friendship, Commerce and Navigation

FF	Ford Foundation
FFI	Friends of Freedom for India
FPD	Foreign and Political Department
FRUS	Foreign Relations United States
GoI	Government of India
HD	Home Department
HMG	His Majesty's Government
IARI	Indian Agricultural Research Institute
IHRL	Indian Home Rule League of America
IIC	India International Centre
ILA	India Lobby of America
INC	Indian National Congress
MATS	Military Air Transport Service
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MfM	Meals for Millions
MFN	Most Favoured Nation
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MPRVD	Multi-Purpose River Valley Development
NAI	National Archives of India
NCDC	National Coal Development Corporation Ltd.
NCII	National Committee for India's Independence
NEA	Near Eastern Affairs
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
O&M	Organization and Methods
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	Office of War Information
OWI	Office of War Intelligence
PRC	People's Republic of China
PWA	Progressive Writer's Association
RF	Rockefeller Foundation
TCM	Technical Cooperation Mission
TISS	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
TVA	Tennessee Valley Authority
UN	United Nations

UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VLF	Village Level Worker
WACS	Women Army Corps
YVA	Yangtze Valley Authority

# 1 Introduction

This book is about India's tryst with the 'American Century' from the start of the Second World War – marking the formal American entry in India – until the culmination of the India-China war of 1962 that signifies the beginning of US strategic retreat from India. It explores the points of convergence between advancing Americanism and consolidating Indian nationalism. It reveals the distinct role played by the American hegemonic creed in agenda setting, advocating policies and managing India's transition from colonial to postcolonial.

The book presents an analysis of the emergence and application of various political, economic and social instruments of Americanism in India and the role played by the Indian elite in operationalizing them. It is a rejection of the conventional orthodoxy that assigns a limited role to America in shaping the imagination of postcolonial India and allows Soviet ideology to take maximum credit for driving Indian "socialistic" pursuits.

The two great historic events of the twentieth century were the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the emergence of the United States that enjoyed 'unprecedented prosperity, stability and wealth'.<sup>1</sup> The impact of the October Revolution on India's political economy is widely covered. However, what is ignored is the rise of America, whose gross national product on the eve of the First World War was equal to that of 'all the other Great Powers combined'.<sup>2</sup>

It is widely perceived that the "socialistic" tone and tenor of Nehru's economic policy and his insistence on non-alignment were responsible for India's refusal to 'recognize the war's two most significant legacies – globalization and Pax Americana'.<sup>3</sup> Nehru's favourite projects, five-year plans, community development schemes and hydroelectric projects, are

considered 'within the framework of rejection of Western dominance'.<sup>4</sup> As Frankel posits, 'at the outset the leadership's commitment to social goals of planning led them to reject as inadequate narrow growth models abstracted from the pattern of industrial development in the West'.<sup>5</sup>

The discussions between Indian and Soviet planning experts in the mid-1950s are projected as the harbinger of Soviet intellectual influence on India's mixed-economy model.<sup>6</sup> The predominance of such narrative obscures the influence of American capital and ideology on the Indian political economy in the first decade after independence. The impact of American universal ideologies in shaping the modes of knowledge production in India remain on the fringes of historiography. Nationalist and even Marxist historical narratives imagine India as a 'freestanding and self-determining entity' in a bi-polar world unconnected to the expansion of global capitalism under the aegis of America.<sup>7</sup>

America not only occupies limited space in India's postcolonial historiography, but also its role in the last phase of India's struggle against Britain remains latent. Nationalist historical writings focus excessively on resistance against Britain and hence skip the transformations within the global capitalist order that brought America to the centre stage after the First World War. The missing global context in nationalist histories, according to Washbrook, has limited the interpretations of South Asian modern experience by according too much importance either to 'bilateral relations with imperial Britain' or hiding behind the 'walls of the indigenous or local and at times just plain peculiar'.<sup>8</sup>

The Indians were not alone in their fight against colonialism. United States was equally keen to see the end of European empires and it played an important role in pressuring the British to resolve the India issue.<sup>9</sup> One-dimensional interpretation of colonial struggles from the perspective of nationalist urges for self-determination preclude us from understanding the final outcomes at the end of rebellions. For example, the actions of British traders in ensuring the final fall of East India Company's monopoly in South Asia have to be taken into consideration in analysing the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny, because the net outcome of the revolt was not the end of foreign rule (as desired by the mutineers) but the transfer of power from Company to Crown – an outcome wished by British traders. Nationalist histories that attribute the emasculation of the British Empire to their loss of faith in the

‘political reliability of the Indian Army’<sup>10</sup> tend to ignore British bankruptcy and the rise of America while analysing the accelerated independence of India.

It is to fill these gaps in nationalist narratives that this book looks at India’s encounter with the post-war hegemon. It is an attempt to understand why the abundant literature on India-US bilateral interactions has remained confined within the walls of area studies and failed to make its mark in comprehending the evolution of postcolonial India. What were the political and strategic compulsions for India as well as America for their reticence on the depth of their bonhomie in the Nehru era?

Vera posits,

Future historians will regard it as extraordinary that Americans who had seemed so sympathetic about India’s grievances against Britain often proved slow to understand that the experience of Western imperialism which they themselves had castigated would at the very least, cause India to be cautious about future commitments to the West.<sup>11</sup>

While Vera blames the limitations of American abilities in appreciating Indian concerns, I argue in this book that the two were much closer than they appeared to onlookers. The appearance of the distance between the two was a choice that they made in the interest of the liberal international order.

India proclaimed neutrality, yet it was tethered to the liberal international order constructed by America in the 1940s. India’s first prime minister, Nehru, was a strong votary of the United Nations and its ability to manage international disputes in a peaceful framework, when Soviet Union was still away from it. During the Korean crisis, India made an immense contribution to ensure the success of the United Nations, which at that stage was fully under the US. India did not see the Korean crisis merely as a bilateral conflict between Korean factions but also as an international action under the authority of the Security Council of the United Nations. In the early 1950s, not only was India directly involved in the United Nations, some of its intellectuals, like RP Masani, were involved in the advocacy of United Nations as the ultimate arbiter of international peace and order.<sup>12</sup>

The victory of the communists in China altered India's role in the Western strategic calculus. India came to be seen by the Americans as their 'firmest bulwark in the East' against communism. By joining the Commonwealth, India consented to be a part of the Anglo-American world and almost sealed its chances of being a genuine neutral. However, India's professed neutrality was an asset for the West that employed it as an effective mediator and an interlocutor between the East and the West. The American confidence in India stemmed from the fact that the Indian ruling elite's heart was wedded to Western capitalism with which their 'political thinking was imbued during the long years of British occupation'.<sup>13</sup>

## **The American Century and India**

To make sense of the extent and exercise of American power in India, we need to place the development of American hegemony in its specific historical context and identify the structural sources of its power. After the First World War, Britain became dependent on American financial support.<sup>14</sup> International economic trends suggested the inevitable obliteration of the British Empire. By the mid-1930s, territorial colonialism, involving direct rule of the colonies, stood undermined and the scales tilted towards the adoption of practices and ideas developed in America. The business and political elite in India were attracted to the American capitalism that emerged in the wake of the Great Depression. American discourse focused on dismantling European colonies and establishing a transnational capitalist system. This suited the penetration of US capital and goods into closed economies ruled by the British and Europeans. From 1937 to 1946, 'dependent capitalism' entered India, which 'graduated to become one of the outer satellites in the capitalist planetary system, with the United States as the central star'.<sup>15</sup>

During and after World War II, European empires further lost legitimacy due to their own inadequacies as well as the ascendancy of American hegemony and communist ideology. By 1945, 'America was the "elder brother" everywhere from Brazil to Australia to the Mediterranean... . It had by now largely replaced the British Empire as the greatest maritime, trading and financial nation, as the new hegemon'.<sup>16</sup>



The American potential for global leadership was first articulated by Henry Luce in the editorial of *Life* on 17 February 1941. He urged his fellow citizens to shun isolationism and use the 'creative opportunity' to better their lives by exporting democratic principles across the globe.<sup>17</sup> Luce identified four ingredients that made the American Century possible. First, the American economic power derived from command of the seas that moved the majority of global trade. The second was professional authority and knowledge that flowed from a skilled workforce, Hollywood and philanthropic foundations. The third ingredient was foreign aid, sought by most of the post-war world. Luce proposed advancing American markets and free enterprise by financing the developing world. The last item in Luce's recipe was the 'American creed' that defined the American political thought based on ideas of freedom and equality of opportunity, as well as justice, truth, and the ideal of charity.<sup>18</sup> According to Carlisle, the idea of the 'American Century' was 'the revised version of nineteenth-century commercial expansion, cast in language adjusted to the social liberalism of the 1930s, was compatible with the ambitions of major American corporations, especially those with multinational aspirations'.<sup>19</sup>

The efforts of Henry Luce were supported by the popular book *One World* by Wendell Willkie.<sup>20</sup> This set the tone for liberal internationalism and advocated a networked global order based on vigorous advocacy of civil rights and civil liberties.<sup>21</sup> Through his book Willkie extended an invitation to the other nations to willingly forfeit a part of their autonomy for benevolent American hegemony. The first Indian prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, and the other Indian elite were immensely impressed with Willkie's views.<sup>22</sup>

One of the important features of the American Century was reordering the international financial governance model, which was initiated at the 1944 Bretton Woods Conference. The year 1944 was also crucial for the Indian economy, as it received a silver loan worth \$100 million from America, ostensibly to fight inflation, and participated in the Bretton Woods Conference. In the same year, the Bombay Plan was released in New York.

India was represented on the board of executive directors of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Its quota was the rupee equivalent of \$400 million, of which \$27.53 million was paid in gold and the equivalent of \$372.47 million (93 per cent of the quota) in rupees.<sup>23</sup> India ratified the

Bretton Woods draft agreement before 31 December 1945, the last date for joining the international financial network. The Indian legislative assembly, discussed the Bretton Woods draft only in January 1946 because the autumn session of the assembly prior to the date of ratification was dissolved and no special session was organized to discuss the matter.<sup>24</sup>

The Indian National Congress (INC) was not opposed to being a part of the World Bank. In fact, most of the Indian representatives at the Bretton Woods Conference later spearheaded independent India's policymaking. A few voices protested against the imposition of an international agreement on India, quoting Russia's refusal to sign the agreement. The counter-argument offered was that Russia could afford to remain distant from Bretton Woods because it was the second largest economic power and could handle things independently. *The Eastern Economist* commented that India's approach was guided by realism, because to 'base our attitude or action on Russia's is to hug a dangerous illusion to the bosom'.<sup>25</sup> Justifying the logic behind following the US, *The Eastern Economist* argued that India had no option but to join the international bodies at the behest of the US because 'India needed capital to grow, to buy capital goods'.<sup>26</sup>

Joining the Bretton Wood was followed by the release of the Bombay Plan, a document that announced India's desire for rapid growth within a decade. In 1944, seven Indian corporate entities came out with an economic plan for India that talked of collaboration with the state. According to Brass, the 'ideology of state-exaltation' was supported by conservative bourgeoisie due to their 'fear of disorder' that was likely to grip India after the British departure.<sup>27</sup> As Chibber posits, 'The Bombay Plan was in fact an effort to blunt the calls for socialistic planning by radical sections of the movement, by preempting them with a call for capitalist planning'.<sup>28</sup> By coming out with a plan before the Indian National Congress (INC) could come out with its own document, the Bombay Planners set the tone and tenor of economics in India.<sup>29</sup>

The plan helped the Indian bourgeoisie erase the stigma of being a comprador and emerge as national bourgeois. Perhaps, it is for this reason that the plan occupies 'a mythic position in Indian historiography'.<sup>30</sup>

The 1944 Bombay Plan supported the idea of India as a socialist country distant from the West. This is despite the fact that the Bombay Plan was inspired by the new transnational linkages with America that were forged

by the Indian bourgeoisie during the interwar years. The plan booklet was published by Penguin Press and first released in New York. The plan's success was based on receiving foreign exchange in dollars. Participation in the Bretton Woods Conference and the release of the Bombay Plan were the twin events that laid the foundation for America to gradually gain access to Indian markets and replace Britain from the position of preeminence in South Asia.

## **The British invite America to India**

In the 1940s, the credibility of British authority and ability to govern India was under severe stress. INC, which according to Churchill was 'a political organization built around a party machine and sustained by certain manufacturing and financial interests',<sup>31</sup> refused to partake in war. The threat posed by Japan and the Indian demand for independence left London with no choice but to introduce India to the ascendant American power. The American penetration into the heart of the British Empire marked the beginning of the end of the Raj and the beginning of the American presence in South Asia.<sup>32</sup>

Almost one year after the announcement of the 'American Century', on 23 February 1942, General George C. Marshall, the American chief of staff, approved 'Operation *Aqilla* that involved the establishment of American air bases in India'.<sup>33</sup> The American military base in India was not a part of the Atlantic Charter signed between British and Americans on 4 September 1940.<sup>34</sup>

Notwithstanding, the grand strategic tie-up between the two English-speaking democracies,<sup>35</sup> the Anglo-American economic rivalry that was in its infancy during the First World War manifested itself fully during the Second World War.<sup>36</sup> Britain did not have enough dollars to buy war material from the US. To help Britain tide over the cash crunch, America introduced the Lend-Lease instrument on 11 March 1941 that accepted deferred payments for items procured from it.<sup>37</sup> Britain borrowed \$27 billion from America to keep the war going.<sup>38</sup> It was relegated to a position of financial dependency with little capacity to resist American proposals on the Atlantic Charter, Lend-Lease, international financial management and

the International Trade Organization (ITO).<sup>39</sup> Churchill struggled simultaneously on multiple fronts, ‘a military war against Nazi Germany, a diplomatic and political war against the Soviet Union, and a fierce rear-guard action against the attempts of the United States to speed up the process of British decline’.<sup>40</sup>

In September 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) promised Winston Churchill, at the Quebec Conference, a sum of \$6 billion in ‘lend-lease aid for the first year of Phase II – the period between the defeat of Germany and the defeat of Japan’.<sup>41</sup> However, as the war ended, America did not want to end up a loser that financed the war only to see the European empire grow. On 21 August 1945, the day of victory, America ‘deserted her wartime ally’ and ‘ordered the immediate termination of lend-lease’. Britain was left with staggering debts. ‘On the eve of First World War the ratio of British debt to gross domestic product was a mere 29 percent; by the end of the Second World War it had soared to 240 percent’.<sup>42</sup> According to British commentators, the enormity of ‘the dollar balance in favour of the United States in Lend-Lease dealings flamed a sucker’ complex among Americans.<sup>43</sup> As Ehrman argued, many American officials feared that a ‘perfidious Albion would use the combination of American assistance and general world turbulence ... to shore up the British Empire’.<sup>44</sup> The American fears were not exaggerated, because some British bankers hoped London would re-emerge as the centre of finance, if war in the Pacific continued for a few more years after its end in the European theatre. It was hoped that a prolonged war in the Pacific would increase US liabilities and help Europe restore its economy and emerge as the “arsenal of democracy”, and that gold could begin to ‘flow east across the Atlantic to the center of confidence’.<sup>45</sup> Washington did not oblige Europe; it dropped the nuclear bombs on Japan and brought a quick end to the war.

## **In awe of America**

World War II placed India in a triangular equation with Britain and America. Although the three were aligned against fascism and authoritarianism, the dynamics within the triangle were complicated. The two big powers jointly fought Japan, but a large section of the Indian

political leadership maintained neutrality in war. Although the political leadership remained neutral, the Indian royalty and millionaire industrialists participated in the war effort in support of Britain. The royal elite offered their bungalows and palaces to the military, hosted lavish garden parties and organized horse shows.<sup>46</sup> For example, in 1942, Gayatri Devi, maharani of Jaipur, hosted a New Year's eve party at 'Woodlands', her parental palace in Cooch Behar (the American GI's Shangri-La) and collected Rs. 100,000.<sup>47</sup>

Birla and other Indian millionaire industrialists who supported the war were also the ones who benefited the most from it. Although they were aware of the dwindling British fortunes, 'they attempted to straddle the middle ground, to mediate between the empire and nationalism'.<sup>48</sup> Tata donated money to Britain for the purchase of two Spitfires for the war.<sup>49</sup> The Dalmia group invested Rs. 500 million to set up automobile units in early 1940s.<sup>50</sup>

America and Britain did not agree on the question of colonialism. Roosevelt, who could ill afford to antagonize Churchill, avoided overt engagement with the Indian political class. On the other hand, America did not want to miss the opportunity of developing a rapport with the future Indian leadership in view of the inevitable demise of the British regime in India.

Hence, Roosevelt officially chose to remain silent. American media sources actively condemned Churchill, thus endearing Americans to India. In response to the failure of the Cripps mission, the call for American intervention gained momentum. Fifty-seven Americans, including Pearl S Buck, Clare Boothe Luce, Louis Bromfield and Dorothy Canfield Fisher, signed an appeal urging Roosevelt and Chiang Kai-shek to reopen negotiations in India. The full-page petition appeared in *The New York Times* of 28 September 1942.<sup>51</sup> Commenting on the failure of the Cripps mission, Lin Yutang wrote, 'We must remember that the only positive thing Sir Stafford Cripps did was offer to cut up India and throw the door open for the Moslems and Princes to tear the Indian Union. That is first class masterly politics'.<sup>52</sup>

From the Cripps mission to the Cabinet Mission of 1946, Americans closely monitored the transfer of power process in India. The American intelligence arm, the Office Strategic Services (OSS), was invited to attend the Simla Conference of 1946 by Dr B.C. Roy, a prominent Congress leader

and M.K. Gandhi's personal physician.<sup>53</sup> On American involvement in India's transfer of power, Rosinger noted:

Even before the end of the war, Indo-American political relations began to enter a new, more active phase. Through diplomatic channels, the United States played a part in the release of the Indian leaders from prison and in the organization of the Simla Conference in June-July 1945... . Although the conference failed, the Congress leaders probably appreciated the American Government's positive interest in the search for an India settlement.<sup>54</sup>

The Indian elite too was keen to court America, as war had exposed them to the power and potential of US money, military and technology. The 5 December 1943 editorial in *Amrita Bazar Patrika* said that US aid to the world would 'possibly be the greatest service done to humanity since the days of Abraham Lincoln'. The editorial further said that if the people of the United States could clear the misapprehensions about the exploitative nature of its private capital, then the 'United States will really qualify for the moral leadership of the peoples of the World'.<sup>55</sup> Sending a message across to America became important for the Indian elite. A press conference in New Delhi without American journalists was like 'Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark'.<sup>56</sup> In one such conference in 1943, at the office of the *Hindustan Times*, C. Rajagopalachari waited for forty-five minutes before one American correspondent made an appearance, and then he allowed the meeting to begin.<sup>57</sup>

At the end of the war, 'the United States stock stood high'.<sup>58</sup> America was idealized and in fact over idealized as a nation. According to Brown, a positive impression was created by President Roosevelt's support to India's cause of independence and the informal interactions that Indians had with the American troops during the war.<sup>59</sup> America's own history as a British colony created an element of goodwill for it in India.<sup>60</sup> America was a natural ally of the dominant classes in India because of its ideological opposition to colonialism and communism.

War helped American exporters break the British hold over Indian markets. It opened up new vistas for Indian traders. By 1940s majority of

the Indian businessmen were convinced that Britain was a spent force and in the post-war scenario, America would be the chief supplier of both capital and consumer goods. The Indian capital was confident and willing to act as an independent player in global markets. 'By 1944, Indian private capital controlled about 62 per cent of the large industrial units employing 1,000 or more workers, and about 58 per cent of the labour force in such factories. The corresponding figures for British private capital were 27 per cent and 32 per cent'.<sup>61</sup>

This was also the phase when Americans were actively courting Indian capital. The collusion between Americans and Indian business was one of the reasons for the frustration for European firms operating in India. For example, a Calcutta based European Jute Company, wrote to an American company complaining that Birla's long-term strategy undercut the European balers and eventually drive them out of the Indian markets by selling cotton at un-remunerative prices to the Americans.<sup>62</sup> The British intelligence report confirmed the Indo-American collusion and said that Birla got the bulk of the business because Simon Swerling, the Calcutta representative of U.S. Office of Economic Warfare (OEW) had earlier served as Birla's agent. The intelligence report stated that Birla 'received the first chance of anything that was going and only after they had had their pick was the rest of the business thrown open to the market'.<sup>63</sup>

The letters written by Indian businessmen to their counterparts in the US during 1943–44 were often intercepted by British officials in India. These censored letters offer insights into the prevalent mood of expectancy and hope in the Indian markets with regard to the American ability to lead the post-war economic recovery. One such letter of 11 September 1943 stated 'Owing to the impetus given by war, American goods have ousted several other exporting markets and laid permanent foothold in the Indian market for their manufactured goods'.<sup>64</sup> Another letter by a Bombay businessman to Westinghouse Electric International, boldly mentioned in the subject, "Practical Post-War Planning". Reposing full faith in American leadership of the industrial world, the Indian businessman commended the Americans for offering the best in 'invention, design and workmanship'. Elaborating his take on the post-war economic situation, the trader from Bombay remarked that India had fortunately escaped war destruction and its people had the purchasing power to purchase goods of daily use in the market.<sup>65</sup>



Some from the community who were keener to see India industrialize wanted Americans to send the machinery and the experts for setting up steel mills in India that could convert Indian iron ore into steel.<sup>66</sup> Not just steel mills, America was also expected to provide assistance for setting up plants for production of vegetable ghee and cottonseed oil.<sup>67</sup>

Not just in India but in the rest of the world too, post war, the US had a distinctive edge over the war-ravaged Soviet Union to shape the international order.<sup>68</sup> The US hegemony peaked in the century following World War II. According McCormick ‘by many measures, the era was one of the historic Golden Ages of global capitalism in terms of growth, spatial expansion, and integration’.<sup>69</sup> The US was the biggest market that accounted for 50 per cent of world GNP and its imports were nearly 16 per cent of total world import during 1950.<sup>70</sup> Even Indian students were queuing up to study in the United States. Indian upper classes preferred to send their children to the US rather than the UK for higher studies. In the academic year 1949–50, 1680 Indian students were in US universities and only 700 in UK.<sup>71</sup>

## **The post-war parting**

The goodwill earned by America during the war should have made it a natural ally of independent India. A robust India-US relationship was expected especially because the Indian political and business leadership had negligible interactions with the Communist world. India’s relations with the USSR in late 1940s were ‘sporadic and symbolic’. Moreover, the Soviets interpreted Indian independence as ‘disguised subordination’.<sup>72</sup>

Despite common aspirations, India-America relations are portrayed to be in a continuous state of discord.<sup>73</sup> The relationship is characterized either as ‘strained, thin, uneasy, fragile’ or in terms of ‘Cold Peace’.<sup>74</sup> According to Limaye, the Indo-US discord has to be understood not just in terms of substance but also ‘in the facility and stridency with which they have been communicated and the expectations against which they militate’.<sup>75</sup> Kux uses the word “estrangement” to describe Indo-American relations.<sup>76</sup>

An impressive array of scholarship has detailed the historical bases of Indo-American relations; however, all analysis is based on the assumption that despite glaring asymmetries the two were equal.<sup>77</sup> Equality is reinforced by focusing on incidents of discord and antagonism that marred the relationship from time to time. It is considered that Indian nationalism supported by socialism and non-alignment<sup>78</sup> offered a formidable challenge to the US hegemony. Wainwright links India's non-alignment with strategic autonomy exercised by India. McMahon's narrative of American involvement on the Indian subcontinent from 1947 to 1965 assigns India's foreign policy with a certain degree of power that tested the limits of the United States "superpower".<sup>79</sup> As Graebner posits:

No country challenged the emerging Cold War assumptions and policies of the United States during Truman years as directly and as consistently as did Jawaharlal's India. Long before the United States and India found themselves directly at odds over developments in Asia, Nehru's forceful acceptance of nationalism as the driving force in Asian affairs presaged the ultimate clash.<sup>80</sup>

Rotter visualizes the Indo-American differences in cultural terms. He gives due weight to bilateral cordiality between the two. However, the central theme of Rotter's work is that the abiding condition of the United States-India relationship was discord.<sup>81</sup> Bhabani Sen Gupta acknowledges the reality of inequality in the Indo-US equation, yet, he feels that

something happened, some chemistry happened in the 1940s which kept us (India and America) apart – call it a divider or a barrier – we started differently ... this has enabled us over a period of thirty years to develop our own way of thinking, our own approaches and by and large we have tried to refine, Indianize, nationalize American concepts, whether this is in sociology or political science or international relations or literature.<sup>82</sup>

The crux of Gupta's argument rests on Indian exceptionalism. He argued that unlike many third world countries, India did not give away its soul to

have a relationship with America.<sup>83</sup> Gupta perceives the Indo-American ideological hiatus in terms of a ‘communication gap’. This barrier, according to Gupta, was healthy since it prevented India from being completely ‘swamped by Americanism’ and ‘saved India from being another Philippines or Pakistan’.<sup>84</sup>

Economic historians Aditya and Mridula Mukherjee believe that India was not adversely impacted by the American takeover of the international capitalist order because, unlike the other postcolonial societies in Africa, Latin America and East Asia, India evaded the dependency trap. According to the Mukherjees, this was possible because of its ‘size, strength and independent character of the indigenous bourgeoisie’. Mukherjee’s argument for India’s unique position vis-à-vis other newly independent countries in the postcolonial capitalist order is because the ‘actual net inflow of foreign capital to India was never very large and was particularly insignificant in the area of industrial investment’.<sup>85</sup> The Mukherjees see the economy as the singular instrument for establishing hegemony; they ignore the role of dominant ‘ideas, institutions and material’ in understanding the structural dominance of India.

The assertion of “uniqueness of India” keeps our appreciation of its engagement with the post-war hegemon limited within the confines of nationalism, non-alignment and Nehruvian idealism.

It is often argued that the Indo-American affair in the 1950s ‘was not one-sided as was the case in many other parts of the third world. It was politically, at least, a meeting of equals’.<sup>86</sup> Indian historians attribute the post-independence distance in the relationship to American policy’s obsession with power and its inability to understand that lack of power left India with no choice but to undermine its utility in conduct of international relations.<sup>87</sup> The insistence on discord undermines the hierarchy of dominance that governed the post-war interstate relationships. The “discord” narratives portray independent India as a symbol of counter-hegemony that confidently evaded US power, which had even spread to major parts of Europe. ‘In 1948–52, the number of US bases and military personnel in Britain increased dramatically’.<sup>88</sup> It is intriguing that a power, which established “little America” at Grosvenor Square in the heart of London, found it difficult to deal with New Delhi. Therefore, it is hard to

understand the post-independence shift in Indian discourse on America and vice versa.

The existing literature on India-US relations does take into account the fact that the colonial experience, passive resistance against Britain and the fear of communism determined the postcolonial consciousness of the Indian elite. However, the unexplored part is the preponderance of pre- and post-war American economic and ideational capabilities that influenced the elite preference for building a liberal democratic regime in India.

## Chapters

The book begins with the arrival of the American military force in India during the Second World War and the conversion of India into a military logistic base – a military *mela* – for the Anglo-American and the Chinese forces operating from India. Besides highlighting the life of an American GI in the CBI (China-Burma-India) theatre, the chapter also discusses the economics of war. It gives evidence of Anglo-American friction in the theatre. But more importantly, it provides evidence of the strategic collaboration between the two intelligence agencies that facilitated American entry into India and provided it the necessary foundation for constructing the pattern of the co-option of India. America used the war to map the Indian resource base and erect elite networks in India that willingly assimilated the American geo-economic and strategic compulsions within the ambit of Indian policy.

The third and the fourth chapters traces the impact of pre- and post-war American ideas – like the ‘New Deal’, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and community development – and soft power on India’s economic thought and socialistic endeavours. The Indian encounters with the American civil libertarians inspired its political ideology that gave precedence to civil liberties over class struggle. The initial dosage of Americanism that India imbibed before independence was reinforced by the application of American soft power through their private philanthropic foundations. The work of these foundations in India helped sustain the elite networks that were essential to establish the American hegemony. The chapter digs from the archival files the debates within the Indian establishment on the penetration of Indian universities by the American philanthropic

foundations, some of which were directly related to the American intelligence arm. The American soft power was instrumental in building an epistemic community in India, which helped build a cultural and political consensus within India on the threat posed to Indian security by Chinese expansionism and atrocities in Tibet. This obsession in the late 1950s led to a futile war with China.

The next two chapters in the book describe India's postcolonial encounters with America. The popular narrative on Indo-US relations generally rely on defining the relationship in terms of discord between the two. I argue against the "estrangement" hypothesis because it fails to account for the asymmetries and hierarchy in the post-war international order. The chapters provide archival evidence to show that even in the so-called worst years – 1950 to 1955 – in Indo-US ties, the two countries cooperated in various fields, including nuclear energy. The relationship catapulted to a much higher level after 1956, when India became an American strategic ally to pressurize China.

The concluding chapter looks at India's non-alignment policy and its linkages to the larger American policy of dealing with large non-communist neutrals. The chapter explores the manner in which the India-China border dispute went on to achieve the Sino-Soviet split and the political dividend reaped by the Indian Right from the 1962 military debacle. It explores the manner in which the US achieved these objectives by encouraging the India-China conflict and manipulating its outcome and challenges the myth that America 'remained aloof from the Sino-Indian dispute over borders except during the 1962 war and its immediate aftermath'.<sup>89</sup>

This work re-interprets the known data to challenge widely held assumptions about Indo-American relations in the early years of independent India. Further, based on archival evidence, some of it unexplored so far, it provides a fresh perspective that indicates a deeply embedded strategic relationship between India and America.

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## 2 Direct American involvement in India

The American Century that was cantering after the First World War began galloping with the arrival of the Second World War. More than 13,000,000 American 'men and women in uniform were scattered all over the world during World War II',<sup>1</sup> Riding piggyback on GIs, the American culture, creed and ideas packaged as American power entered new frontiers of influence. India was one such frontier where the incumbent colonial power invited the emerging power to set up its informal empire. The British paved the way for Americans to study and make a complete assessment of India's economic strength, helping them map resources that could be tapped from South Asia. Britain was loathe to relinquish India. However, they were left with no choice but to seek American money and military to avoid being swamped by surging Indian nationalism, Japanese expansionism and Russian communism. American backing helped Britain retain some of its hold over Indian affairs even after quitting. It helped them leave India peacefully with their dignity intact. For example, Vice-Admiral Sir Stephen Hope Carlill, the last British chief of staff of the Indian Navy, served until 1958.

The Americans fought hard to end the European empire, but they had a soft corner for their key transatlantic ally. For many American supporters of India's cause, like Clare Boothe Luce, it was America's world obligation to ensure that India's peaceful power transition did not 'devastate the British'. She desired the Anglo-American combine to ensure the continuation of strategic and political independence of free India and that it did not 'fall prey to aggressive neighbours'.<sup>2</sup>

There were tensions in the India-Burma theatre between American and British officials who saw their power slipping away rapidly. However, they learned to live with these differences. This chapter presents archival evidence on the Anglo-American friction over censorship of US publications entering India. The British ran a big propaganda machine in America to apprise them of how well they had managed India and its enormous army. The compulsions of the coalition prevented Washington from overt involvement in Indian politics. However, the 'India Lobby', a broad-based network of Indians and Chinese living in America and influential American intellectuals, media personalities and associates in the corporate sector and politics actively canvassed for overthrowing colonialism in India.

'The Second World War saw the security partnership between America and Britain go from a temporary marriage of convenience to a seemingly eternal aspect of the special relationship. This process began well before the United States entered the war'.<sup>3</sup> In 1946, the two signed the intelligence-sharing agreement.<sup>4</sup> Even before the agreement, their agencies were acting in concert to manage not just the war but also India's movement towards freedom. This chapter gives archival evidence on three joint covert operations between the two agencies in India. This helped American intelligence establish an institutional presence in India that served them well during the Cold War. The first operation involved the secret airlifting of Vijayalakshmi Pandit to the USA in an American military plane. The second joint operation involved the leak of an important letter by William Phillips, a representative of President Roosevelt in India, castigating British misrule in India. The third was the placement of a possible mole in Nehru's office in 1946.

War intricately tied India to the Anglo-American financial order. On the one hand, the sterling balances that accrued to India at the end of the war kept her dependent on Britain for foreign exchange. On the other hand, the financial impact of the American Lend-Lease material that was left behind in India and the US silver loan to India in 1944 continued to keep India engaged until as late as 1958. These instruments of financial control exercised by the Anglo-American combine ensured that postcolonial India remained chained to the liberal international order and Americanism.

The archival evidence presented in this chapter supports the argument that the Second World War formally introduced America to India and laid

the foundation for a relationship that would operate at many levels in the post-independence period. Setting up of a military base in India also gave Britain greater flexibility during the “transfer of power” to tackle Indian nationalists. The American presence ensured that anti-colonialism did not take a violent turn in India, and both the British and India bourgeoisie interests were well protected. The Anglo-American combine also guaranteed that India did not drift away from the Anglo-American orbit.

## **GIs in India**

The outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941 brought together America, Britain, China and the Dutch East Indies (DEI). They combined to form the ABCD collaboration ‘to block Japan’s imperial destiny’.<sup>5</sup> The China-Burma-India (CBI) theatre of operations was set up by mid-1942 under the overall command of Field Marshal Archibald Wavell based in India.<sup>6</sup> General Joseph Warren Stilwell led the Allied forces in China and was the ‘American commander of Chinese troops’.<sup>7</sup> The tenth Air Force of the US was also designated for the CBI theatre and placed under the command of Maj. Gen. Lewis Brereton.<sup>8</sup> Stilwell’s team set up section headquarters at Karachi, Bangalore and Calcutta, and two advance sections were temporarily established at Agra and Dibrugarh. The US forces radio station at New Delhi started broadcast on 23 March 1943.

Initially, the war supplies to China, including gas, were sent using the US Air Force C-46 aircraft based at Misamari in Assam.<sup>9</sup> However, the aerial mode of transportation to and from China was expensive. To obviate this difficulty, the US military engineers constructed a land route from Assam to Kunming via Burma, which was identified as the Ledo road, but was later rechristened as the Stilwell road. In 1943, the US Army also constructed a five-mile-long oil pipeline that ran alongside the Stilwell road and connected Calcutta (now Kolkata) harbour to Kunming.<sup>10</sup> A second line, running parallel to the first pipeline, was also built to meet the increased demand for petroleum products.<sup>11</sup> By October 1944, the Americans set up thirty-five hospital installations in India and Burma with 1171 nurses to cater to the growing number of troops falling sick.<sup>12</sup>

A jungle warfare training centre was set up at Ramgarh, which the British had built to house African prisoners. Incidentally, it was at the Ramgarh Session of the INC held in March 1940 that a resolution was passed rejecting support for war. The first courses in artillery and infantry for the Chinese Army in India (CAI) commenced from August 1942.<sup>13</sup> Stilwell's team trained the Chinese to operate US-made radio sets, tanks, trucks and guns. The logistics and money for the troops at Ramgarh was British responsibility, while their discipline and administration was looked after by Chinese officers. According to Stilwell, for the Americans, Ramgarh was as tough as Siberia, but for the Chinese it was a wonderland because they got abundant food and meat to eat.<sup>14</sup> In a letter to his wife written on 7 August 1942, Stilwell mentioned, 'I have got about 12000 Chinese troops down there and we are making artillery troops out of them, using weapons in India that we can't get to China'.<sup>15</sup> By the end of 1942, about 21,000 trained Chinese soldiers were flown over 'the Hump' back into China.<sup>16</sup> There were over 100,000 Chinese soldiers in India by the end of 1944.<sup>17</sup>

There are numerous personal memoirs of military men and journalists who participated in the CBI operations.<sup>18</sup> A record of Stilwell's mission to China in the CBI theatre<sup>19</sup> is available in the official Army World War II series and in his diaries and personal papers. The unit histories of American veterans of the CBI theatre are well documented.<sup>20</sup> For example, there exist historical accounts of the 101 detachment, a special operations unit in Burma linked to the US OSS.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, most of the airborne squadrons involved in CBI have their histories available in digital form. Despite these rich sources, one finds that narratives on the impact of the American experience in India are limited. Most of the literature concentrates on Sino-American foreign relations during war.

The history of India as an American military logistic base from the early to mid-1940s is not the object of historical analysis in India. However, Yasmin Khan's *The Raj at War* does cover in some detail the presence of American soldiers in India and its social and political impact on Indians.<sup>22</sup> The American military experiences in India find frequent mention in literary works that refer to the cities of Calcutta and Delhi during the war. In scholarly work, these appear either in the form of anecdotes or as an adjunct of the larger British war effort against Japan.

A rich and exclusive source of American experiences in India during the war is provided by two weekly newspapers of the American army in India: the *CBI-Roundup* and *Yank*. *CBI-Roundup* was printed by *The Statesman* (a newspaper owned by Tata, the prominent Indian industrial house) in New Delhi and Calcutta. The idea for such a newspaper was conceived by Capt. Fred Eldridge together with Clare Luce, wife of Henry Luce, the owner of *Time* and *Life* magazines. The first issue of the paper came out in September 1942.<sup>23</sup> After leaving India in 1946, American veterans restarted their publication, naming it *Ex-CBI Roundup*.

More than 200,000 American military men were stationed in India and Burma during the war.<sup>24</sup> According to Molesworth, the American arrival to India during the autumn of 1942 marked the 'American invasion of India, with Karachi as their main base and East Bengal their area of operations'.<sup>25</sup> In Delhi, the American staff was mainly housed in the Imperial Hotel.<sup>26</sup> The US Army officers stayed at the Karnani Estate Hotel at Calcutta.<sup>27</sup> The US Army headquarters in Calcutta was located in the Hindustan building, which had a 'post office, finance office, Base Section offices, air, rail booking offices, a radio station, giant post exchange, officers mess and living quarters, signal offices and others'.<sup>28</sup> The US Army also leased many mansions in the 'exclusive Ballygunge area of Calcutta', to house a few army nurses.<sup>29</sup> In Delhi, according to Nirad Chaudhuri, the royal palaces vacated by the Indian princes for use during the war were not given to the American GIs, who were accommodated in and around Queensway in the hurriedly built 'ugliest and meanest conceivable huts'.<sup>30</sup> Distinguishing the American soldiers from the British based on their appearance and sartorial style, Chaudhuri writes,

They (Americans) were all strongly built, straight men, with very narrow hips, and what struck me most were their trousers worn very low at the hip bone. I had never seen before trousers worn in this manner, for both Englishmen and Indians wore their trousers at the proper waist line, some even higher with braces... . Their uniform was in a shade of Khaki which was almost cream, and in striking contrast to the Green uniform of the British soldiers.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, the Americans found the 'Indian way of dressing and manners' very different.<sup>32</sup> The GIs were amused by the sight of sun-dried cow dung that was used by poor Indians to cook; the GIs called these cow-dung patties 'Patty-cake Annie'.<sup>33</sup>

The large influx of Americans led to a hike in hotel rates, which many Americans felt was 'sheer robbery by Delhi hoteliers'.<sup>34</sup> The American capacity to pay a monthly salary of Rs. 60, equivalent to \$18, to domestic help<sup>35</sup> led many servants to leave British officers for better pay with the Americans.<sup>36</sup>

The enormity of the American military establishment in India can be gauged from their consumption pattern. The Americans operated 130 exchange stores in the India-Burma theatre that employed 1475 civilians, 620 enlisted men and 72 officers. The stores supplied duty free and subsidized liquor, cigarettes, chocolates and other items which directly came from New York. Items purchased in India were certain types of insignias, evening bags, sarees, brocades and all types of curios. The average monthly volume of sales ranged between \$2,500,000 and \$3,000,000.<sup>37</sup>

During 1945, besides smoking 80 million packs of cigarettes, the American troops in India consumed 'approximately 89,000,000 bottles of beer, 19,000,000 bottles of coke, 12,127,000 cans of fruit juices, and 6,880,000 cans of Toddy'. The rations of GIs were supplemented with 31,105,000 bars of candy, '1,108,000 one-pound cans<sup>38</sup> of chocolates and 4,314,000 packages of cookies' in 1945.<sup>39</sup> US Army nurses based in Calcutta procured their lipsticks, colognes, shampoos and other "beauty products" from the department store Hathaway Laidlow of London.

Americans became popular for their huge appetite for eggs and apple pies.

A "GI" would sit down to a meal which included 1 to 12 eggs before starting on anything else. The market was not geared for this sudden demand for eggs and chicken. Sind and south Baluchistan began to suffer a shortage of both, the demand soon reached so far south as Madras that even Punjab and Delhi were affected. The price of egg and fowl soared.<sup>40</sup>



During the course of their work, the Americans came in contact with many Indians – porters, loaders, bearers, shopkeepers and accountants, which helped them pick up a few Hindi and Urdu words.<sup>41</sup> During such interactions, Americans were introduced to words such as ‘*crore*, *lac*, and *maund*’.<sup>42</sup> *Chota*, meaning “little”, was a word that caught the American fancy. They coined terms like “*chota wionsoon*” – a term for heavy rains that preceded the arrival of monsoon, and “*chota peg*” – a small-sized helping of whisky.<sup>43</sup> Incidentally, when the American troops started departing from India leaving behind a tiny winding-up team of 6,087 personnel,<sup>44</sup> the *Roundup* newspaper did not stop publication; it reduced the number of pages and rechristened itself as *Chota Roundup*.<sup>45</sup>

Indians too picked up American cultural forms. The Indian Army’s Assam regiment was raised in 1941 to fight the Japanese, its regimental song, ‘*Badluram ka badan Zamin ke neeche hai ... aur humko uska ration milta hai*’ (Badluram’s body is buried but we draw his ration), is inspired by the American martial tune ‘John Brown’s Body’.

The American presence was felt on Calcutta’s cultural landscape too. According to Robinson, the biographer of Satyajit Ray,

Although Calcutta was bombed by the Japanese and hundreds and thousands left it (including the refuse collector), the damage was slight. It was the influx of American GIs and other allied servicemen that changed things, and gave a kick to the city’s cultural life.<sup>46</sup>

Satyajit Ray’s encounter with the GIs gave him the opportunity to see American movies at the American camp even before they were released in London. This was the time when ‘for the first time in Calcutta it became normal to read a review of a US movie *after* seeing the movie – probably in a wafer-thin copy of *Time*’.<sup>47</sup>

The Americans introduced baseball to the Maharaja of Patiala. In the summer of 1944, the maharajah provided his cricket field and invited two GI teams to his summer palace high in the foothills of the Himalayas for a game of baseball.<sup>48</sup> Boxing was another sport the GIs popularized in India. A story in the *Ex-CBI Roundup* reported about an all-Allied open boxing tournament that was witnessed by more than 26,000 fans at the Calcutta Race Tracks in April 1945. ‘The proceeds from the match amounting to Rs.

35,500 were donated to the Indian Red Cross.<sup>49</sup> However, Molesworth, the British general, held a different opinion about the American troops' interest in sports. He felt that the American NCO (non-commissioned officers) or GI played 'no outdoor game (there were no facilities for Base-ball or American style football) but stood about on street corners looking for liquor or women or both'.<sup>50</sup>

Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, 'entertainment is always a national asset. Invaluable in times of peace, it is indispensable in wartime'.<sup>51</sup> Swimming pools and clubs were hired for the entertainment of GIs. Dances, movies and other programs were regularly organized at clubs. The Red Cross Burra Club in Calcutta was the hub of most of social activity. The last event of the India-Burma theatre was held at Monsoon Square Garden, the biggest sports arena owned by the Indian Skating Club in April 1946, where '500 GI's and their dates danced to the music of "Buster's Gang" from Bengal Air Depot'.<sup>52</sup>

Parties were an important feature of the CBI theatre. The top floor of the American intelligence agency, OSS Headquarters at '140 Regent Estate, Tollygonge' in Calcutta was famous for wild parties.<sup>53</sup> The nurses were not allowed to socialize with GIs. They could only go to outings with officers and were often flown from remote areas for officer's parties. In one such sortie, on 4 March 1945, sixteen nurses were killed in an air crash on their way to Calcutta for a party.<sup>54</sup>

Celebrations and get-togethers were encouraged; however, what was not tolerated was the troops visiting brothels. Popular among the American men were the 'fleshpots of *Karaya* Road, where a staggering variety of European *femmes fatales* made the hymeneal sacrifice some twenty times nightly for a staggering amount of hard cash'.<sup>55</sup> *Sonagachee*, Calcutta's red light area, was also frequented by many GIs. According to an annotation in a photograph in the Clyde Waddell collection of GIs in Calcutta, the rate of the sex-workers ranged from \$3 to \$6.<sup>56</sup> The military police kept a sharp vigil on GIs entering brothels because this was the singular cause for the high rate of venereal diseases among the GIs.<sup>57</sup> If venereal diseases were a problem in Calcutta hospitals, then "Delhi Belly" (GIs suffering from gastrointestinal problems) was a major issue in Delhi's military hospitals.<sup>58</sup>

Another reason why the military police closely watched the GI movements in and out of brothels in Calcutta and Karachi was that this is where the troops developed contacts with drug pedlars and smugglers. The police were always on the lookout to nab American and Chinese troops indulging in smuggling arms and gold and misappropriating supplies and medicines. The China National Aviation Corporation (CNAC) military aircraft that came from the USA to Calcutta via Karachi was an effective conduit for arms and currency smuggling by the Chinese troops flying back to their country after training in India. The smuggling of gold was a lucrative business for US Army pilots in the war years. The British policy of flooding the Indian market with South African gold had created a vast differential between the metal's official price, Rs. 42 per tola, and its market rate, which stood at Rs. 71 per tola.<sup>59</sup> To stop the ferrying of unauthorized items, the British increased civilian custom staff at American army airfields in Assam at Chabua, Sookerating, Ledo and Mohanbari.<sup>60</sup>

Corruption was widespread in the theatre. In April 1944, the US military police caught a GI named Bowles for selling the US Army medical stores to two British persons, W.M. Davidson and C.J. Hill, the secretary and the manager of Messer Steel Product limited. The consignment was smuggled during transit from the Calcutta port to the US Army warehouse. Bowles received Rs. 1600 for selling the consignment containing quinine sulphate and Atabrine (used for treatment of malaria) tablets worth Rs. 50,000.<sup>61</sup>

The records of the Calcutta Police Control's weekly survey of 25 March 1944 shows the manner in which Sergeant Rudsil of the US Army and C.K. Brown, an American pilot, were caught for illegal possession of twelve pistols and a considerable quantity of ammunition. While the police lightly dealt with American pilots involved in drugs and other illegal rackets on the eastern front, the violation of the Arms Act was taken very seriously.<sup>62</sup>

The India-Burma theatre closed down on May 31, 1946. The Americans left behind a detachment of US Army in India consisting of 150 officers and men under Col Sumner Waite's command to deal with all leftover matters pertaining to the CBI theatre. The detachment was activated on 1 June, and all its members were relieved from the army and transferred to the foreign branch of Civil Service. The post-war work included registration of graves, claim settlements, war crimes and procurement and the disposal of fixed installations, port operation, liaison and records. The detachment was

mainly housed in a 'cooperative mess' in New Delhi, and some were also stationed in Calcutta at Camp Knox.<sup>63</sup>

### *Censorship and turf war*

The Indian Censorship Control Department (CCD) was one of the biggest source of Anglo-American acrimony in the theatre. The proliferation of American magazines and journals among Indians was a problem for the British officials who could not tolerate Americans swamping the intellectual space in India. The CCD was not unduly perturbed about the religious publications, which was not a part of the United States Office of War Intelligence's (OWI) mail bag, because they were not likely to be picked up by Indian editors for reprint.<sup>64</sup> CCD's focus was on the provocative magazines, namely *Asia & the Americas*, *Christian Century*, *The Nation*, *Unity*, *The New Republic* and *Time*.<sup>65</sup>

*Asia*, an American magazine, was regularly stopped. *Asia: The American Magazine on the Orient* was published by American Asiatic Society since 1901. In 1942 it was renamed as *Asia and the Americas* (often referred to as *Asia*) and finally closed down in 1946. In 1923, *Asia* published a special issue focused on India. The main contributor in the 'India number' was E.S. Montague, the former British secretary of state for India, famous for the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919.<sup>66</sup>

Dorothy Straight owned *Asia & the Americas*. Dorothy's father William C. Whitney was one the richest men in America.<sup>67</sup> Her second husband, Leonard Elmhirst, was secretary to Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore in 1921. Gertrude Emerson was the magazine's correspondent in India. In 1932, Gertrude married Boshi Sen, an agricultural scientist and a disciple of Swami Vivekananda in the American consulate at Calcutta. Gertrude Emerson was the author of *Voiceless India*, for which the foreword was written by Pearl S Buck.<sup>68</sup> The British targeted *Asia*, largely because of these influential connections and their ability to spread the pro-India contents of the magazine.

In 1943, eight issues (February, March, May, June, September, October, November and December) of *Asia* were barred from entering India. In 1944, three more issues (January, March and August) were banned in India.<sup>69</sup> The August issue featured five articles on India. "Journey among

the Warriors” by Edgar Snow concluded that ‘the British during the summer of 1942 probably lost their last chance to reconcile the forces of Indian nationalism to continued membership in the empire. Henceforth nothing short of amputation will satisfy the decisive elements of Indian society’.<sup>70</sup> Snow, who visited Nehru shortly after the failure of the Cripps mission, said that Nehru discussed the situation with ‘unexpected acerbity’, saying that the Cripps mission was not designed to succeed because Churchill was much too smart for Cripps.<sup>71</sup>

Louis Fischer’s article, “Will the British Stay Over”, raised questions about ‘freedom within the empire’. Another article, “Famine over Bengal” by William Hocking, chairman of the Philosophy Department at Harvard University, said that the very nature of imperialism precluded the formation of any common front of government and people against the common enemy hunger.<sup>72</sup> An article on the life of Sikh settlers in British Columbia by Marian Smith, president of the American Ethnological Society, was also part of the August issue of *Asia*. “The Bombay Plan” by Howard Danial and Minnie Belle, Australian economists in Washington, analysed the economic development plan and described it as ‘a catalytic agent spurred by the daring enthusiasm of these eight business leaders’.<sup>73</sup>

The bureaucracy in India did not have a credible explanation that could be given to the American editor for ‘stopping’ the magazine.<sup>74</sup> They decided to admit to the Americans that the reason for stopping the issue was its potential to adversely impact military and public morale in India.<sup>75</sup> The bureaucracy was particular not to mention the ban on the coverage of Subhas Bose as one of the reasons for censorship, to avoid feeding the editors of *Asia* ‘with any kind of ammunition to make trouble’.<sup>76</sup>

In the same issue of *Asia*, Drew Pearson’s “Journey among Indians” was considered particularly objectionable by the British. The article gave a vivid description of Pearson’s meeting with Mahatma Gandhi at Sevagram. Pearson was accompanied by A.T. Steele of *Chicago Daily*. Steele had earlier been commissioned by the British to visit Tibet and educate the Americans on the strategic relevance of Tibet in the post-war scenario.

Pearson’s article pertained to Gandhi’s ultimatum to the British, where he said, ‘This time it isn’t a question of (giving the British) one more chance, it is open rebellion’. He further stressed that Gandhi’s determination to stick to his position gave the British ‘no choice except yield or fight him. With

the rope they had given to him he will now surely hang himself. He was playing the game of men “On the hill” just as they had foreseen he would’. Pearson concluded his article by saying that ‘it would be Gandhi’s last struggle where he would lead a united Indian people. It was the biggest gamble of his life and the old man knew it. But, as he said elsewhere, he had not much time left and he wanted to see India free before he died’.<sup>77</sup>

In March 1944, the Americans sought permission to reprint 1000 copies each of the weekly issues of *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines at Calcutta using the plastic plates that had been flown from the USA. CCD gave permission, but with a caveat that both *Time* and *Newsweek* would be subject to normal Indian censorship rules and all reprinted issues will have on the cover page, ‘For use of U.S. Army Forces only’, ‘Not for sale’ and ‘Not to be reproduced’.<sup>78</sup>

The Indian authorities raised some legal issues regarding three American army newspapers printed at Calcutta – *The Yank*, *Command Post* and *Tiger Rag* – for not filing the mandatory declaration in accordance with the Press and Registration of Books Act of India. The US Army responded by stating that the printer’s name and the place of publication could be given on the papers, as it would be in contravention of the censorship regulations for overseas mailing.<sup>79</sup> In the end in 1944, the matter reached the highest level when B.P.T. O’Brian, the press officer, New Delhi, complained directly to Major General D.I. Sultan, the general commanding the CBI theatre, requesting him to ask the ‘three newspapers to fall in line with the law of India’.<sup>80</sup>

The high frequency of ‘stops’ on incoming printed mail from the USA irritated the American authorities in India.<sup>81</sup> The Americans demanded autonomy in censoring their mail; the CCD felt that the limited number of US Army postal centres lacked the infrastructure to implement Indian censorship provisions. The tensions in the theatre also resulted from the fact that the Americans did not like British interference in matters related to the Chinese Expeditionary Force (CEF). The United States Army headquarters in India wanted to be the sole channel for passage of traffic relating to CEF.<sup>82</sup> The British, however, felt that it was not possible for the Indian censors to distinguish cypher telegrams meant for CEF from the ones not meant for them. They argued that the onus was on the American military to apprise the Chinese about this requirement.

In April 1945, a US press delegation with a letter of introduction from President Roosevelt and the secretary of state visited India. The three-member delegation consisted of William Forrest, editor of the *New York Herald*, Carl Ackerman, dean of the school of journalism, Columbia University, and Ralph McGill, editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. These journalists were entertained because they were considered to be unconnected to ‘the “free press movement” sponsored by Kent Cooper of Associated Press of America and to Clare Luce’.<sup>83</sup> After meeting the editors, O.K. Caroe, secretary of the External Affairs Department (EAD), commented, ‘I was rather left with the impression that if these two gentlemen are typical of the best that the American Press gallery can produce, that best is a little crude’.<sup>84</sup>

### *British propaganda machinery in America*

In the early 1940s, American opinion mattered to Britain. The British knew that with America breathing down their neck and nationalism picking up momentum, their days in India were numbered. However, they wanted to inform America that Britain could not simply be obliterated from the Indian scene. Because the knowledge networks developed by them were essential for post-war management of India. To achieve this objective, the Anglo-Indian officials embarked on a massive publicity campaign to respond to the stream of articles and reports coming out from the US in support of India’s independence. Another important aim was to show the princely states as a part and parcel of the Indian polity and ‘not the sinks of iniquity’ as projected by the Congress.<sup>85</sup> It was assessed that the American media fostered the idea that ‘the main characteristics of the States are oriental luxury and effeteness’, which in turn aided the Congress propaganda that states were ‘anachronism kept in being by the British as an excuse to bar the way to progress’.<sup>86</sup>

In November 1941, it was decided to depute Creagh Cohen, one of the secretaries to G.S. Bajpai, to disseminate publicity material in America about the Indian states. The problem was lack of publicity material that could be sent from India. The ‘Reforms Brochure’, which highlighted the constitutional and administrative progress of Indian states, was the only

publication available with the government, and this too was unsuitable for publicity because of its poor production quality.

In 1941, the United States was targeted with a publicity campaign focused on the activities of the governments in important states and their contributions to the war effort. Roy E. Larsen, the producer of March of Time (MOT), an American short film series, was approached to make six films of 1000 feet each on Indian states. MOT had never before made a “subsidised” or sponsored film, but Larsen, during his India visit in December 1941, agreed to make the film under a different title for a sum of Rs. 120,000.

The political department of the Indian government recommended certain states be ‘induced to contribute to the sum required for the production of the film’.<sup>87</sup> The project did not take off because Larsen could not commit due to its preoccupation with other projects and no Indian film company was considered competent enough to undertake production. The publicity plan included establishing contacts with American correspondents who frequented Delhi and also with the representatives of important news agencies.<sup>88</sup> In addition, Vijiya Tunga was commissioned to publish a book on Indian states for a consolidated sum of Rs. 5000. The publication of a brief 32-page pamphlet in the Oxford series was also on the agenda. Sardar K.M. Panikkar was to produce the first of a series of pamphlets. The other pamphlets included (a) “The Chamber of Princes” by the chancellor of the chamber, (b) “Reform movement in states” by Sir V.T. Krishnamachari and (c) States and War by Mir Maqbool Mahmood (secretary to the chancellor of Chamber of Princes).

Panikkar was sent on a propaganda tour of America in November 1942 with the consent of the Maharaja of Bikaner. Maqbool Mahmood, was recommended by the chancellor to the Maharaja of Kapurthala; however, he was not considered suitable for the job.

In America, Panikkar attended the Pacific Conference organized by the Institute of International Affairs, New York. The Indian delegation to the conference was led by Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar in his capacity as the chairman of the Indian branch of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Panikkar was given the equivalent of £250 for the foreign tour, but he expected this amount to be raised to £450 to ‘exploit the possibilities of setting up some permanent agency in the USA’. Panikkar told K.S. Fitze, political secretary, that his setup would conduct its business in full



knowledge of Sir G. Bajpai. Panikkar's idea of an agency in America was considered because it was 'in accord with the wishes of the Chamber of Princes and with the policy favoured by the Secretary of the state'.<sup>89</sup>

The finance department was however not in favour of granting Panikkar any additional foreign exchange. N. Sudaresan of the finance department wrote on 14 November 1942 that the policy of the British treasury demanded conservation of all available dollar resources for furtherance of war. Since Panikkar's mission in the USA was not war related, the official opined that the £250 asked by Panikkar was only the beginning of further expenditure which would follow after the establishment of the agency. He further said that even if the endeavour were sponsored by the princes, it would fail to satisfy the question of dollar exchange.<sup>90</sup> The political department agreed that the matter was not directly connected to war. However, it clarified that the expenditure was justified because a proper understanding of Indian states by American Allies was imperative. Finally, the finance department approved the enhancement of Panikkar's allowance.

By September 1942, Creagh Cohen reported from Washington that the 'Indian states were best avoided as a subject partly because of constitutional prejudice against such institutions and partly because America was not interested in them'. However, the propaganda material prepared was sent to the USA.

In 1944–45, the Indian government spent \$134,700 (Rs. 451,245) on publicity of India in the USA. The money was spent on pamphlets and lecture tours by some Indian academics.<sup>91</sup> As a part of publicity work in America, the following pamphlets were distributed: (a) "Congress Responsibility for the Disturbances 1942–43" (b) "Swords and Ploughshares: The Indian Army as a Social Force" (c) "Reconstruction Planning by Reconstruction Committee of Council, India's Part in Third and Fourth Year of War".<sup>92</sup>

Col K.S. Himatsinhji, the Indian Army liaison officer in Washington DC, was asked to go on a lecture tour and publicize India's war effort and the record of the Indian Army. Himatsinhji, a scion of a famous Indian royal family, was the nephew of Ranjitsinhji, a famous Indian cricketer. He was the first Indian to attain a colonel's rank in the Indian Army. From 1926 to 1929, the colonel was assistant military attaché at the British embassy in

Tokyo. Again during 1941–42, he was in Japan as first secretary in the embassy, he was in Tokyo on the day of the Pearl Harbour attack.

Himatsinhji took several lecture and broadcasting engagements in the United States and Canada. The meetings were arranged either directly by the government of India information services or in cooperation with the United States war department, British Information Service or the United Kingdom information office in Canada. Archival records show that from August 1944 to the end of June 1945, Himatsinhji had some hundred meetings, made about ten broadcasts and held nine press conferences. In addition, he had several small informal meetings and interviews with pressmen, radio commentators and military officers.<sup>93</sup>

T.A. Raman, the Indian government's acting public relations officer in Washington, reported that Himatsinhji's talk with American correspondents influenced Charles Rolo's articles, and editorials in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* and also Rolo's article "India's Modern Army" said that the Indian Army – the largest force of volunteers in history – could not be forgotten after the war because the India of tomorrow was 'being shaped not only in Whitehall, the Congress party, and the Moslem League, but also in the ranks of Indian army'.<sup>94</sup> Likewise, two columns by the important military commentator Henson Baldwin and articles by Colonel Bellah in the infantry journal were 'vetted' by the Indian colonel.<sup>95</sup>

The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* of 1 June 1945 reported Himatsinhji's speech at the junior chamber of commerce in which he said that 'the Japanese atrocities are much worse than the Germans'.<sup>96</sup> He further added, 'we must not treat the Japanese kindly. We must finish them as a military power'. According to Himatsinhji, the B-29 bombing of Tokyo was likely to determine early surrender by the Japanese. His talk also gave an eyewitness account of the 'Doolittle raid' that had struck Tokyo.<sup>97</sup>

Raman reported that even the Haskell publishers of the *Kansas City Star*, a powerful mid-western paper which often belittled India's war effort, was also impressed with Himatsinhji and published a complimentary editorial on India's war effort.<sup>98</sup> W. Colston Leigh Bureau, one of the most important firms of lecture agents in the USA, offered Himatsinhji a contract for a coast-to-coast lecture tour, on the same basis as General Carlos Romulo of the Philippines.<sup>99</sup>

Raman wrote two books titled *A Report on India* and *What Does Gandhi Want?*. Twenty-five thousand free copies of his second book that was critical of Gandhi were distributed in America.<sup>100</sup> These were also distributed free in China since the book claimed that unlike Nehru and Rajagopalachari, Gandhi did not ‘feel the warm glow of admiration for China’s epic resistance’.<sup>101</sup>

## Networking with the Indian elite

The British opened the door heralding the arrival of the American Century in India. Without British help, Americans would have found it hard and taken much longer to build their network in India. The official American involvement in India’s political affairs began with the participation of Louis Johnson, the special representative of the American president in the first Cripps mission. On 9 April 1942, Johnson reported to his government that Indians were totally disenchanted with the British rule and mentioned that ‘the magic name over here [India] is Roosevelt. The land, the people would follow and love America’.<sup>102</sup>

Before the GIs began landing in India, the Americans sent a team of industry experts to study the viability and potential of India as a logistic base for the Allies in the Near East and the Far East.<sup>103</sup> India’s proximity to the war front and its capacity to provide military manpower was of interest to the Americans.<sup>104</sup>

The Technical Mission, headed by Henry F. Grady arrived in India on 17 April 1942. His team included domain experts from the field of military vehicle production, engineering and skill development.<sup>105</sup> During its five-week tour of India, the mission covered factories and ports from Karachi to Kochi (then Cochin). Its final report recommended conversion of engineering shops, essentially ‘jobbing shops’, into mass production factories and advocated strong centralized control of war production, under the aegis of the government. However, the Indian authorities were opposed to the mission’s proposals to make the war production authority in India into a ‘Czar of Production as in the U.S.A’.<sup>106</sup> The Indian business community demanded that the technical report be made public and the government denied it on strategic grounds.

American intelligence and information agencies were the most crucial institution that helped the US penetrate unknown territories and build transnational linkages that would serve to strengthen the idea of the American Century. In 1941, William Donovan was appointed director of the Coordination of Information (COI) in America. The United States opened an outpost of the Office of War Information in New Delhi in April 1942 and subsequently its branches were established in Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi.<sup>107</sup> The idea was to popularize the American way of life among Indians and build goodwill for post-war business engagements between the two countries.<sup>108</sup> However, after one year OWI was bifurcated into a news agency and cultural affairs centre. Bill Benton of Benton and Bowles, the largest advertising firm in the United States, took over the news agency. The cultural aspect was looked after by the United States Information Services (USIS), which established its first library in India at Calcutta in 1943.<sup>109</sup>

In June 1942, the COI metamorphosed into a full-fledged intelligence agency and was rechristened OSS. Donovan was supported in this process of transformation by the British intelligence unit Special Operations Executive (SOE). Both the OSS and SOE worked in tandem to achieve the war aims.<sup>110</sup> With the American forces present in India, Donovan wanted to establish an OSS outfit in New Delhi to conduct secret operations in India.<sup>111</sup> Leo Amery, secretary of state for India, and Lord Linlithgow, the viceroy of India, were opposed to the idea of an American agency in India. According to Aldrich, in 1943, Linlithgow repeatedly warned London that OSS intentions were 'all part of the American anxiety to dig in this country with a view to the post-war period'. OWI, he claimed, had already displayed an eagerness to establish contacts with so-called nationalist elements and industrialists in India. Linlithgow also suspected American naval intelligence at Bombay of collecting intelligence 'in preparation for the post-war commercial penetration by the US'.<sup>112</sup>

Despite opposition by some officials, India and Burma became the first British imperial territories, east of Suez, to receive an OSS mission.<sup>113</sup> In 1944, OSS headquarters was set up at 32 Ferozshah Road. Located in the heart of New Delhi at the eastern edge of Lutyens's bungalow zone, the 1.32-acre property had the name plate on its gate that read 'Dr. L. L. Smith, American Dentist'. OSS, with a designation Detachment 303, set up eleven

offices across India.<sup>114</sup> The Ferozshah Road office was later taken over by the Ford Foundation. The US authorities also established the Office of Economic Warfare (OEW) in Delhi.

### *Airlifting Pandit*

However, British officials in India who were opposed to American communication with Mahatma Gandhi encouraged American generals, military officers, journalists and members of various US missions to freely cross-examine Muhammad Ali Jinnah for about an hour and three quarters at an informal party at Hotel Cecil, Delhi, organized by Sir Evelyn Wrench, the American relations officer in the Indian government, on 22 February 1944. The report by Evelyn on the party stated that Jinnah

Came out of the ordeal very well. He made a very nice reference to his readiness, when Pakistan is established, to work in friendly association with the British Commonwealth and said that we had mutually something to give to each other. I was glad to hear these sentiments expressed before our American friends.<sup>115</sup>

However, it would be wrong to say that the SOE issued a blanket ban on American interactions with Indian politicians. The Americans openly courted Nehru's sister, Vijayalakshmi Pandit. In late 1944, after the loss of her husband in jail, Pandit wanted to be with her daughters who were studying in America. Incidentally, Madame Chiang Kai-shek had helped Pandit's daughters secure the Mayling Sung Scholarship to study at Wellesley in 1942.<sup>116</sup> The problem was that Pandit's passport was confiscated by the British. It is at this time Edith, the American wife of Dr Pao, the Chinese consul general in Calcutta, chaperoned her to a US Air Force party in Calcutta, where she was introduced to the American military set-up. Her American friends then helped her to fly out of India in a United States Air Force plane on special orders from Summer Wells, the US assistant secretary of state. Pandit's clandestine move was well known to the British, who had intercepted a telegram of General George E. Stratemeyer, the chief of Allied Air Command in the eastern theatre, regarding Pandit's flight.

Once in the USA, Pandit had lunch with Eleanor Roosevelt. The Chinese consul general in New York gave a big reception in her honour. Henry Luce organized a dinner reception for Pandit at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, where governors of every state in the US were invited.<sup>117</sup> She also attended the Pacific Relations Conference<sup>118</sup> at Hot Springs in Virginia as one of the delegates of the Indian Council for World Affairs that was given observer status at the conference. The other delegates were Pandit Hirday Nath Kunzru, Justice Fazli Hussain, Dr Lokanathan and Mr B. Shiva Rao.<sup>119</sup> Before finally leaving for India, she also met President Truman.<sup>120</sup> The Clark Getts Lecture Bureau organized her lectures at various universities in the United States that helped her earn money. Elaborating on Pandit's activities in the USA, the *Hindustan Times* reported that her work was not getting due recognition due to British influences.<sup>121</sup>

The second piece of evidence which points towards Anglo-American intelligence collaboration on Pandit's flight is provided by the fact that Viceroy Lord Wavell passed on Nehru's message to Richard Walsh, requesting him to give \$500 to Pandit on her arrival in the United States.<sup>122</sup> Richard Walsh – of John Day and Company, the publishers of Nehru's autobiography – was Nobel Laureate Pearl S. Buck's husband, and both were in the vanguard of the fight for Indian independence in America.

Beside the Bucks, Louis Fischer, Lin Yutang, Norman Thomas (who stood as socialist candidate for president), John Hynes Holmes, Roger Baldwin, Paul Robeson and Vincent Sheean constituted the 'India Lobby' in America (ILA).<sup>123</sup> The Lobby was run by a few Indians living in America and aided by the active support of prominent American intellectuals, media and business personnel. The top leader of the India Lobby, Clare Boothe Luce, Republican member of the House of Representatives, was a part of the Council for the International Recognition of Indian Independence – formed in Britain – whose chairman and secretary were two British members of Parliament, W.G. Cove and Sydney Silverman, respectively.<sup>124</sup> Incidentally, the Indian element in the ILA were J.J. Singh, Anup Singh, Krishnalal Shridharan, Syed Hussain and Haridas T. Muzumdar.<sup>125</sup> Pandit started the 'Save the Children Fund' fund to help famine victims of Calcutta in 1944 for which Madame Chiang Kai-shek donated \$10,000 and Eleanor Roosevelt gave \$5000.<sup>126</sup>

The India Lobby of America was formed in the mid-1930s on the foundations of the Indian Home Rule League of America (IHRL) and the Friends of Freedom for India (FFI) founded in 1917.<sup>127</sup> ILA was considered 'a sort of analogue of India League in England spearheaded by Krishna Menon'.<sup>128</sup> However, there is no evidence of the ideological affinity between the two leagues. In 1939, in line with the India focus, three books on Gandhi and Nehru were published in the United States.<sup>129</sup> Shridharni wrote *War without Violence*, in which the introduction was written by Oswald Garrison Villard, the founder of the American Anti-Imperialist League. Muzumdar's work was titled *Gandhi Triumphant! The Inside Story of the Historic Fast* and Anup Singh, who received a doctorate from Harvard University, wrote *Nehru the Rising Star of India*, for which Lin Yutang wrote the introduction. Anup Singh headed the National Committee for India's Independence (NCII) set up in Washington in 1939 and wrote for *Asia* and *The Harper's Magazine*.<sup>130</sup>

In 1941, J.J. Singh, a shop owner known for his flamboyant lifestyle, became the president of ILA. According to Gould, there was a close relationship between J.J. Singh and Clare Boothe Luce, 'implying some measure of intimacy'.<sup>131</sup> Solnit writes that J.J. Singh was a 'remarkable lobbyist' under whose leadership, 'a tiny, twelve-member cultural group evolved into a nationally prominent coalition that embodied and in some cases pioneered modern tactics of mobilizing American public opinion and government influence-peddling'.<sup>132</sup>

ILA's main role was to counter the negative propaganda about India's freedom struggle by interacting with the American media. Advertisements and articles were used to garner support for Congress party's decision to launch the 'Quit India' movement. ILA released an advertisement in the *New York Times* on 28 September 1942, which announced, "INDIA: The Time for Mediation is NOW". Prominent Americans signed the advertisement, including Roger Baldwin, director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Abba Hillel Silver, the leader of the Jewish Lobby in America, Bruce Bliven, editor of *The New Republic* and Upton Sinclair, the winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1943.<sup>133</sup> *India Today*, the monthly bulletin of the ILA, often criticized the Indian establishment for spending too much on sending Indians on lecture tours to the US.<sup>134</sup>

J.J. Singh organized public meetings in support of India's cause. ILA held a meeting in Town Hall on 9 August 1943 to commemorate the anniversary of the arrest of the Congress leadership. *India Today* reported that about 1500 people attended the meeting. The speakers were R. Henry Carpenter, a clergyman and student of the cooperative movement who had visited India in 1942; Mai-Mai Sze, daughter of the former Chinese ambassador to London and Washington; Anup Singh, editor of *India Today* and Louis Fisher. Nehru's two young nieces were also introduced at the meeting.<sup>135</sup> The highlight of the evening was the speech by Clare Luce delivered by Roger Baldwin, treasurer of ILA, in which she reassured Indians that post-war America would not provide any help to Britain in their fight against the Indian freedom struggle. She appealed to Indians to throw out the British. "Go to it", she said, "millions of people in Britain and millions of Americans are with you".<sup>136</sup>

The India Lobby in America was tiny in comparison to the Jewish Lobby in America. As per the 1940 census, only 2405 Indians lived in America; 'by contrast, when the precursor to the Jewish Lobby, the Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs was formed in 1940, its membership totalled 171,132, over seventy times the number of Indians residing in America at the time'.<sup>137</sup> However, despite its small size ILA made an impact in India. Even S.A. Dange, the leader of the Communist party of India (CPI), hailed Pearl S. Buck, Lin Yutang and Upton Sinclair as role models in his inaugural address at the Fourth All India Conference of the Progressive Writer's Association (PWA) held at Bombay from 22 to 25 May 1943.<sup>138</sup> America also had the 'China Lobby' and Clare Boothe's husband Henry R. Luce, one of the prominent leaders of the lobby that advocated stringent American action against the communists both before and after 1949. Interestingly, Clare Luce and Pearl S. Buck were associated with both the India Lobby and the China Lobby. Gould and Solnit have extensively covered the work of the India Lobby with special emphasis on the role played by William Phillips, personal representative of President Roosevelt on his arrival in India, and the circumstances under which he had to depart following the famous 'Drew Pearson Affair'.<sup>139</sup>

### [The Drew Pearson Affair](#)



William Phillips, the special representative of the US president, arrived in India accompanied by Maj. Richard P. Heppner on 8 January 1943.<sup>140</sup> Both were serving in the London office of the OSS before coming to India.<sup>141</sup> Phillips's main job was to develop links with the Indian political class. During his stay, he met several political leaders but was not allowed to meet Nehru and Gandhi.<sup>142</sup> His activities in India were covered in the Indian media.<sup>143</sup> However, just one month after his landing in India, a serious political crisis erupted in India. Gandhi went on a 21-day "fast to capacity" on 10 February. The viceroy decided not to yield. After a few days, as Gandhi's health started to dip, the political situation began to deteriorate, but the British remained unmoved. They were confident of coping with the political fallout arising out of Gandhi's possible death. However, William Phillips was not so confident and felt that Gandhi's death could lead to a big political uprising in India that would adversely impact the war efforts against Japan. His other major concern was the preservation of 'white prestige' in India.<sup>144</sup> Phillips applied continuous pressure on the British to resolve the matter and help Gandhi break his fast. He advised his government that the only remedy to the disturbing situation was 'to try with every means in our power to make Indians feel that America is with them and in a position to go beyond mere public assurances of friendship'.<sup>145</sup>

By 25 February, Gandhi's health worsened, but the British continued to be obdurate. The Americans were careful. The secretary of state instructed Phillips to issue a statement regarding the roles and missions of the American troops in India, in the event of Gandhi's death. The Americans wanted to state that their forces would not 'indulge to the slightest degree in activities of any other nature unless India should be attacked by the Axis powers, in which event American troops would aid in defending India'. They also wanted the British to know that

The American forces in India will exercise scrupulous care to avoid the slightest participation in India's internal political problems or even the appearance of so doing. In event of internal disturbances American forces will resort to defensive measures only should their own personal safety or that of other American citizens be endangered or for the necessary protection of American military supplies and equipment.<sup>146</sup>

Gandhi ended his fast on 3 March, but Phillips remained unsatisfied with British handling of the India situation. On 14 May 1943, he wrote a secret letter to President Roosevelt in which he attacked the British refusal to explore alternative policy options on India's independence and the restrictions it imposed on US action against Axis powers in Asia. He was critical of the British contribution in the war against Japan and made damaging references to the low morale of the Indian Army, calling it a mercenary force. The letter also questioned Churchill's stance on the non-applicability of the Atlantic Charter to India.<sup>147</sup>

The letter containing American support for India's independence remained secret for more than a year. However, the contents of the letters appeared in Drew Pearson's column, "Washington Merry-Go-Round" in *The Washington Post* on 25 July 1944. The media revelations on a fourteen-month-old classified US government document created a political storm.

The British, who detested Phillips for his excessive interference in Indian political affairs, used the opportunity to declare him *persona non grata* within their establishment.<sup>148</sup> The net result was that Phillips resigned from his position and never returned to India. The letter was widely reported in the Indian media. The publication of the letter achieved what Phillips had set out to do – preserve the 'white prestige' by informing Indians that America did fight for them.

The controversy on the publication of William Phillips's personal correspondence with Roosevelt escalated. It was discovered that the letter travelled from the US State Department to the British embassy in Washington, where it was finally handed over to Pearson. Initially, Sumner Welles, the former undersecretary of state, a supporter of India's cause and a good friend of Pearson, was suspected of passing the letters to the press.<sup>149</sup> However, after four decades it came to light that it was not Welles but Robert Crane, a junior desk officer on South Asia in the US State Department, who had engineered the leak. Crane was deeply involved in the work- and leisure-related activities of ILA. He was a frequent visitor to 'Castle Rock', the social headquarters of ILA, situated in the Maryland suburbs of Washington.<sup>150</sup> However, soon after the article was published, Crane joined the OSS office in India.

According to various versions, the letter travelled from Crane to Pearson with the active assistance of either K.A.D. Naoroji, a representative of a

Tata firm in New York, K.C. Mahindra, member of an Indian supply mission in the USA, or Obaidur Rahman, press officer at the Indian High Commission in Washington. Anup Singh, a leading figure in ILA, also claimed direct involvement as a courier of the letter.<sup>151</sup>

The British investigations however, identified Major Altaf Qadir, a staff member of the Indian agent general stationed in Washington, and Chaman Lal as the main culprits. After the Pearson leak, Qadir was deported to the war front in Burma and Lal was sent back to India.<sup>152</sup> According to Lal's own version, on his return from the USA, he was locked up in a military prison in Karachi.<sup>153</sup>

Chaman Lal had come to the USA to avoid the "underground" that was chasing him for his alleged role in the arrest of Jayaprakash Narayan. This information was passed to J.J. Singh of the ILA by Vijayalakshmi Pandit. Pandit had also warned her daughters, studying at Wellesley, not to entertain Lal.<sup>154</sup> J.J. Singh wrote to Devdas Gandhi, editor of the *Hindustan Times*, informing him that Lal 'created varied impressions' and adopted a 'very oily approach', during his stay in New York.<sup>155</sup>

The British authorities granted Lal permission to travel to the USA on the condition that he would not indulge in any anti-British propaganda in America. Intriguingly, Lal did not stick to his promise. He published four articles in the *Hindustan Times* against extravagant British propaganda in the USA. In one of his articles of September 1944, Lal asserted in a closed door meeting with a group of House members in the USA that a large number 'of his countrymen would spring to arms in the Allied cause if Britain would definitely promise future independence to India'.<sup>156</sup>

His 1945 book *Vanishing Empire*, which the British alleged was funded by the Japanese,<sup>157</sup> covers his months-long stay in Washington where he professes to have 'twice visited the White House and acquainted President Roosevelt with the whole situation in India'. He also claims meetings with Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins', Vice President Henry Wallace, Wendell Willkie and several dozen leading politicians of the United States.<sup>158</sup>

In one of his articles sent from San Francisco to the *Hindustan Times*, Lal openly wrote against the British extravagance, where he said:

Lord Halifax (formerly Lord Irwin, the Holy Christian) British Ambassador is working at the helm of a brigade of ten thousand British propagandists in America. It costs Britain four crores of rupees a year while the amount spent from Indian tax-payers' funds is shrouded in secrecy by jugglery of various budgets at the disposal of Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, world's costliest ambassador. British propaganda agents crawl all over the city. There are hundreds of them here. They have taken rooms, placed their key representatives in almost every hotel where delegates and press representatives are quartered. That gives them an advantage of keeping an eye on all that transpires. Every evening the B.I.S (British Information Service) tosses cocktail dinner parties strictly for 'big shots'. Whenever they will line-up really powerful names such as top-ranking publishers, columnists and commentators, they bring in Mr. Eden the 'dazzler' to give them a frank diplomatic 'off the record' sales talk. That is what is known in this country as influencing the influencers.<sup>159</sup>

Lal's explanation for the enormous expenditure by the British propaganda machinery rested on the argument that Britain wanted to deny India the sympathy and moral support that it sought from the 'liberty loving people of America'.<sup>160</sup> Lal was especially critical of Girja Shankar Bajpai, India's agent general in the USA, for receiving \$52,000 for propaganda purposes in America and for staying in a palatial residence in Washington. Chaman Lal mentions a news item in the *Washington Daily* that was published on 20 July 1942 to mark the arrival of Girja Shankar in Washington to suggest that the British used the occasion to highlight the fact that India was not a poor country. The newspaper reported,

Sir Girja Shankar is a wealthy man even for India; his home is considered as one of the finest. In their gardens in India there are 50,000 magnificent rose-bushes, there are acres of lilies ... the perfumes of those gardens in full bloom is something which might have inspired 'Omar Khayyam'. Visitors to Calcutta must include this dreamland in their sight-seeing programme in the future.<sup>161</sup>

All the media play involving leaks and semi-leaks point to the involvement of intelligence agencies. The post-leak enquiries into the incident reinforces the UK-US intelligence cooperation. Interestingly, three months before Drew Pearson allegedly created a storm in Anglo-American relations, the 16 April 1944 issue of the *People's War*, an organ of the CPI Bombay, mentioned Drew Pearson in an article titled "U.S. Not Taken In". The article said,

I have just received an interesting cutting from the 'Washington Merry Go Round' by famous columnist Drew Pearson. He writes, Fischer, New Delhi representative of the U.S. office O.E.W. has complained bitterly to his boss Leo T. Crowley, Economic Warfare Administrator about the hostility and reluctance with which the British met the idea of O.E.W. opening an office in Delhi. *And Fisher goes on to report that the British fear American representatives may send to Washington, information concerning the internal situation in India through channels not subject to British censorship.* [Emphasis added.] This, the government of India seems to believe, might stimulate American sympathy for the nationalist movement and criticism of the government's ineffective administrative techniques.<sup>162</sup>

Pearson was also involved in a controversy surrounding President Roosevelt's 1 August 1942 letter to Gandhi.<sup>163</sup> On 8 July 1944, Pearson published in *Extension India* (a US-based publication) the contents of FDR's letter.<sup>164</sup> The Indian government raised objections to Pearson's article. The American Mission informed New Delhi that Pearson's story was picked up from Indian media reports. It is fascinating that the Indian media carried the story on 24 June 1944, the same day the letter was delivered to Birla for onward despatch to Gandhi.<sup>165</sup>

The reverberations of the Pearson article also echoed in the US Congress. According to the *Congressional Record* of 21 September 1944, Calvin D. Johnson said,

I do not rise as an idealist seeking to spread the celestial blessings of Atlantic Charter to that oppressed nation. I rather rise as an American

whose primary interest is in the welfare of more than 100,000 American soldiers ... who are fighting in that country and to protest the lack of cooperation on part of our allies whose dilatory tactics have lengthened and altered the course of the entire Pacific war.<sup>166</sup>

In a serious indictment of the British, Johnson said that the 'bitter years of war may be ahead in the Pacific if our allies do not stop playing Dominion politics and direct their attention to affairs of today and not their empire of future'.<sup>167</sup>

In his speech, Johnson drew attention to Drew Pearson's article and the letters from William Phillips and Chiang Kai-shek to President Roosevelt and urged the 'American public [to] take cognizance of the admonitions and warning contained in those letters'.<sup>168</sup> He further complained against the British and said that it was because of their non-cooperation that Stilwell's campaign in India ran two years behind schedule. He lamented that the Japanese took over Burma and ensured complete land blockade of China only because of Gen Wavell's arrogant refusal to agree to Chiang Kai-shek's proposal to put two armies under Stilwell's command. Johnson was of the opinion that had Wavell agreed in time to use two Chinese armies, Burma could have been saved.

Johnson also brought out the difficulties encountered during the training of Chinese at Ramgarh. He referred to the award of contract for cutting down ordinary military rifle stock by a few inches in order to make it fit for short-statured Chinese soldiers. The Americans found an Indian contractor who was willing to do the job in two weeks. But the British put paid to American efforts by stating that since the contractor was already working for the British, he would not be able to 'cut down the Chinese rifle butts'. The Americans later discovered that it was only after the contractor had been identified by them that the British awarded him the contract. This led the American general to approach the Indian government for the completion of the job. He was told that the work would take six months to complete. The general did 'succeed after raising hell in having the contract assigned to a section of Cawnpore Arsenal that had been closed for lack of work'.<sup>169</sup> Citing another administrative barrier erected by the British, Johnson said,

Last year, when the Chinese troops were about to go into action, American forces called for a new rice sack which had been developed to enable a Chinese infantryman carry a week's ration. An American general went to the Government of India and was told that there were no firms available to do the job. He went out and found one and was then advised that the government of India had refused thread to sew the sacks on the ground that it was a critical war material.<sup>170</sup>

### *Mathai the mole*

The third example of OSS-SOE collaboration is revealed in the archival records on M.O. Mathai, who stealthily moved from the American consulate to the External Affairs Department (EAD) in the Indian government and subsequently landed up as personal secretary of the Indian prime minister in 1946. Mathai joined the United States Foreign Service at the American consulate, Madras, as an assistant in 1938. From mid-1942, he was on British payroll in India. By the end of 1945, Mathai had gotten Nehru's approval to handle his secretariat.

There is not much reference about Mathai's career after graduation from Madras University either in any book on Nehru or in Mathai's two books of the late 1970s, *Reminiscences of the Nehru Age* and *My Days with Nehru*. What is known is that Mathai was engaged as a typist by C.P. Mathew.<sup>171</sup> Mathew was associated with the Alwaye Union Christian College, from which Mathai graduated.<sup>172</sup> Both Mathew and Mathai were Syrian Christians from the erstwhile Travancore state. According to archival documents, Mathai's first job was secretary to Bishop Abraham Mar Thoma of Tiruvalla. He worked with the church authorities for four years and subsequently joined the American consulate at Madras in 1938. In 1942, when the war was at its peak, Mathai decided to leave his job at the American consulate. On 8 April 1942, the 28-year-old confident young man wrote directly to the secretary of the External Affairs Department. The bishop of Calcutta and the metropolitan of India forwarded Mathai's application as well as a strong recommendatory letter from Rt Rev. Bishop Abraham of the Mar Thoma Church, Malabar, to the EAD.<sup>173</sup> With a recommendation from the church, on 29 April 1942, Mathai wrote directly

to L.A.C. Fry, undersecretary in EAD informing him that the American consul in Madras was willing to relieve him if he found a suitable job with the government of India. He requested his application to be considered 'without having any misgivings concerning possible offence to an allied government'.<sup>174</sup> On 28 July 1942, he thanked Fry for giving him a personal interview and for his letter assuring him of a chance in the department.<sup>175</sup> One month later, Mathai informed the External Affairs Department that he had decided to stay in New Delhi indefinitely at the 'South Indian Boarding House, Connaught Circus'. It is not clear what Mathai did in Delhi after joining the British set-up in mid-1942.<sup>176</sup> It is widely believed that before joining Nehru's secretariat, Mathai worked for Red Cross at the Assam-Burma border.<sup>177</sup> When he shifted to Assam to work as an American soldier is also unknown. M.O. Mathai, affectionately known as "Mac", remained Prime Minister Nehru's special assistant from 1946 to 1959. He enjoyed privileged access to Nehru's household and his office. Managing secretarial work of the leading figure of a newly independent nation was a demanding job. Mathai volunteered for the task because in his own words 'he was prepared to live dangerously'.<sup>178</sup>

Corruption charges forced him to resign his government job in 1959. Officially, he was investigated for amassing wealth to the tune of Rs. 2 million through a trust formed in his mother's name. Allegedly he had derived all this wealth by working as a CIA agent. According to S. Gopal, 'Cabinet Secretary Vishnu Sahay, who investigated Mathai's case was privately convinced that Mathai had compromised just about every file since the days of interim government'.<sup>179</sup>

### *The economics of war*

The expansion of India's facilities for producing war equipment was undertaken almost one year after the outbreak of war. On 25 October 1940, the British government convened the Eastern Group Conference at New Delhi to stimulate industrial production for wartime needs. The aim was to devise a strategy to establish 'a secure economic base for the defense of the Eastern Empire'.<sup>180</sup> The conference was attended by official delegations from the governments of Australia, New Zealand, Malaya, India, Burma, Ceylon, South Africa, East Africa, Rhodesia, Palestine and Hong Kong. It



was decided to make India and Australia the hub of wartime production and supplies.<sup>181</sup>

To manage the war resources, the British-Indian government authorized the issue of currency in rupees against sterling securities instead of gold in reserve, on 8 February 1941. The war expenditure that India incurred was not reflected as part of the annual budget but was shown separately as recoverable from His Majesty's Government (HMG).

Initially, the inflationary impact of the financial settlement was limited. However, with the fall of France, the responsibility of supporting the Allied power in the Middle East fell on India. Japan's entry into war pulled India directly into World War II. India became a military base for the Anglo-American forces, leading to an exponential rise in government expenditure. India's import bill surged mainly because war material was brought in from America and Britain.

It was almost impossible for India to liquidate the sterling balances because of tight controls imposed on British money markets, severe import controls and restrictions on commercial shipping due to war. The frozen sterling balances were transferred to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) that treated them as reserves against which fresh currency was printed. RBI's policy to issue currency against reserves that did not constitute effective international purchasing power added to the inflationary pressures on the Indian economy. The money supply between September 1939 and February 1943 jumped by 320 per cent.<sup>182</sup> It was estimated that during the period 1944–45, the total currency in circulation was Rs. 10.68 billion as compared to Rs. 6.43 billion in 1942–43.<sup>183</sup>

The spread of war to Africa and Asia necessitated augmenting British forces with Indian foot soldiers. The Indian government, which was hard pressed for finances and faced a severe drought situation, could ill afford to enlarge its army to protect the British overseas holdings. However, after some persuasion and negotiations, India agreed to recruit, train and equip additional soldiers on the condition that the revenue expenditure of the Indian Army engaged in 'out of area' operations and the cost of arming it was to be borne by the British. Once the agreement became operational, the enormity of the costs involved in overseas operations dawned on the British and subsequently they refused to settle the bills with India.

London made no effort to repay the debts to New Delhi. In fact, only book entries were initiated. The British kept spending on war and the

sterling balances kept mounting in India's favour. The total sterling holdings of the RBI in January 1945 were Rs. 13.04 billion as against 640 million at the end of August 1939.<sup>184</sup>

The Indian dollar resources were used to increase British rather than Indian trade and economic development. As soon as war was declared, the government converted India's entire dollar holdings into sterling. Despite being a major theatre in the world war, India was denied the use of dollars. Severe restrictions were imposed on the import of American machinery and spares. The Indian businessmen desirous of importing from America were either told about the non-availability of shipping or the need to conserve dollar resources due to war.

While India demanded quick settlement of sterling balances, Britain proposed retrospective reconsideration of the debt. While Indians complained about the financial crisis and food shortages caused by imperial profligacy, the British propaganda, on the other hand, relentlessly praised its policies for enriching the colonies. Paul Einzing, writing in *The Banker* (December 1944), said, 'the fairy princes of Whitehall have generously rewarded the poor nations of the East – endowing them with undreamt of riches overnight, leaving a treasure of £50 mn in Baghdad, £100 mn in Jerusalem, £200 mn in Cairo, £1000 mn in New Delhi and so forth'.<sup>185</sup>

### **India and the Lend-Lease**

In 1940, Britain did not have enough money to buy war material from the US.<sup>186</sup> To help Britain tide over the cash crunch, America introduced the Lend-Lease instrument that accepted deferred payments for items procured from America. Initially, America was the main supplier of aid; however, with the direct participation of US forces in overseas theatres, it too required aid in terms of local goods, services and raw material for effective prosecution of war, and the relationships became reciprocal.

The total value of US Lend-Lease exports to India from March 1941 to October 1943 stood at \$71.0131 billion.<sup>187</sup> The Reverse Lend-Lease, which included local supplies and services for the use of US forces in India, was estimated at \$56.9 billion in June 1943. India provided aviation and motor gasoline, lubricating oil and other petroleum products to the United States armed forces. In addition, the United States army received water, electricity,

furnishings for buildings, clothing including mosquito nets and gas-proof outfits and Indian telephone and postal services.<sup>188</sup>

Post war, in early April 1946, Indian government officials went to Washington to conclude an agreement for the settlement of financial claims of each government against the other. Under the 1946 agreement, India acquired full title to US-owned surpluses left in India and the United States got in return all the reciprocal aid articles in their possession.

This reciprocal aid was assessed at \$50 million. This limit was based on the understanding that the US owed India about \$45 million in cash and about \$5 million for meeting claims against US armed forces in India. This amount was not to be settled in cash. Instead, New Delhi got the rights to sell all the US-owned surpluses located across India with a caveat that if the value of sale proceeds minus the normal customs duty exceeded \$50 million, then the US would be entitled to an amount equal to one half of the excess of the proceeds over a sum equal to \$50 million converted at the rate prevalent at the time of signing the agreement.

The agreement stipulated that the US government would be paid in any of the following ways:

- a Delivery of title to the government of USA by the government of India of the real property and improvements of real property in India as selected and determined by agreement between the two governments.
- b By establishment of a rupee fund for expenditure by the government of the USA in accordance with the agreements to be reached between the two governments for carrying out educational cultural programmes of benefit to the two countries.
- c Should any balance remain after meeting the requirements described in (a) and (b) above, by payment in rupee to the government of USA for defraying governmental expenses of the United States in India.<sup>189</sup>

The US left the Indian shores almost empty-handed. They saved on shipping the war material back home and the hassle of ensuring its resale. The onus of managing and selling the US equipment fell on India. The Indo-US war surplus property agreement of 1946 made it mandatory for India to render a final account of sales as of 30 June 1948 to the US government.

The issue of Lend-Lease sales continued for more than a decade after independence. In 1955, Sherman Cooper, the US ambassador to India, asked New Delhi to expedite settlement of accounts since he needed funds for constructing the new embassy building. An interim payment of Rs. 77 lakhs was made to the US embassy at the end of December 1955.<sup>190</sup> The Indian establishment did not do the final adjustment because ‘no cent per cent auditing of the sales account was undertaken’,<sup>191</sup> as some buyers had initiated legal proceedings against the government for short delivery of war material. The Americans denied any responsibility for legal claims that the Indian government was entangled in and pressed for quick settlement of their dues. In order to resolve the matter, India offered to reserve a sum of Rs. 32.5 million out of the joint surplus profits until the legal processes were completed and pay further instalments amounting to Rs. 10.7 million to the US embassy.<sup>192</sup> The US contested the Indian proposal. The US embassy was informed that the proceedings for arbitration were likely to extend until December 1956, and accounts could not be settled before January 1957. The US agreed to wait but asked for immediate disbursement of \$5 million (Rs. 2.45 million) for financing the 1957 version of the Fulbright scheme. India agreed and the amount was disbursed in October 1956.

In July 1957, the US asked for further payment of Rs. 2 million to fund the Fulbright scheme for another three years. The Ministry of Works Housing and Supply (the dealing agency) agreed to pay only Rs. 1.25 million. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) did not want the Fulbright scheme to be curtailed, it recommended payment of the full Rs. 2 million on ‘political grounds’, to avoid its refusal to give the amount from being misconstrued ‘as a deliberate act of non-cooperation’.<sup>193</sup>

### *American silver for India*

Besides the military equipment, America also left behind silver that kept postcolonial India tethered to the post-war hegemon. By 1943, silver prices in India rose sharply due to hoarding and melting of silver coins by the public. The government tackled the spiralling silver prices and the shortages of coins in the market by injecting more silver into the market and by producing more coins. Help was sought from America to replenish the silver stock of the RBI. In the beginning of 1944, under the US Lend-Lease

scheme, India received 100 million ounces of silver to combat inflation in India.

The US government was caught in a dilemma of whether to sign an agreement with the Indian government or the British government. Initially, the 'Silver Senators' in the US Congress and the Secretary of Treasury, Henry Morgenthau Jr., recommended that America sign a deal with India. However, the US State Department felt that the onus of returning the silver 'ounce by ounce' should fall on the British government because India did not have a government in true sense. The State Department was aware that the risk far outweighed the political advantage that was likely to accrue by dealing directly with India. According to Wallace Murray, the risk lay in the possibility of 'a violently nationalist government' with 'strong colour prejudice against the white population of the West', going back on the promises made by the British on its behalf.<sup>194</sup>

The American decision to involve Britain in silver transactions was not liked by some Indians. K.C. Mahindra, member of the Government of India Supply Mission to the United States, had three reasons for a direct deal between India and America. Firstly, India was a separate entity. Secondly, hedging meant lack of faith in independent India to honour its debt. Mahindra's last reason was that India was more solvent than debt-ridden Britain at that juncture in history.<sup>195</sup>

America acknowledged the strength of India's sterling balances and gold reserves but was sceptical because India lacked an independent dollar balance. The counter-argument was that the absence of dollar reserves was not India's fault. The American policy of assuming the entire British Empire credits as a single whole was responsible for depriving India of the legitimate use of its dollars.

On 29 February 1944, Lord Halifax, the British ambassador to the US, asked the US secretary of state to reconsider their decision in view of the fact that the future Indian political leadership was not likely to quarrel with the US because 'every consideration would lead them to follow a different line!'<sup>196</sup> Finally, it was decided to lend-lease the silver jointly to the British and the Indian government. India signed the agreement with the USA and it was underwritten by Britain.

However, the return of \$100 million worth of silver by India was covered under an exclusive 1944 agreement and deliberately kept out of the Lend-Lease settlement of 1946 between New Delhi and Washington.

Commenting on the omission of the silver loan issue from the scope of 1946 negotiations, *The Eastern Economist* argued against the return of silver by India because the white metal was essentially exported by America to produce war commodities and only a small portion was used for fighting inflation.<sup>197</sup> In early 1957, 'lend-lease' silver was returned to America and India's readiness to meet its obligations was praised as an example of financial responsibility and fiscal integrity.<sup>198</sup>

## Conclusion

The war exposed Indians to the American way of life and informed them that spheres of prosperity existed beyond London. Witnessing American power at close quarters convinced the Indians that the British power had shrunk and independence was inevitable. The presence of the large number of uniformed people converted Indian cities into the site of a global war. 'Rest-camps, hotels and training-bases were filled with British, Indian, American, African and Chinese troops at a time when the sovereignty of the British Raj was shaken to its core'.<sup>199</sup> India was not destroyed by war, but the indirect consequences of providing logistic services to more than 400,000 foreign troops were enormous. Besides, causing high inflation it also aggravated the famine conditions in Bengal.

An important aspect of the Anglo-American military alliance was the collaboration on the intelligence front. Strong relations between the two intelligence agencies were sometimes marred by divergent views on political matters. A classic example of this was the difference of opinion on London's reluctance to let the US agency interact freely with important Indian politicians. The differences were, more pronounced between officials on the scene of action than between the two agencies. The inevitability of the end of the British Empire was sometimes difficult to accept for the officers assiduously protecting their country's possessions in India from encroachment by Americans. However, excessive emphasis on Anglo-American acrimony on the India issue tends to overshadow their tacit alliance to keep Indian politics glued to Western liberalism.

The Lend-Lease agreement between the two powers shows that despite the larger strategic objective of the alliance, Americans were ready to support the British only up to a limit. Their own interest was paramount and

post war, the Americans were not as patient with the British as they had been during the war.

The Anglo-American alliance was the most crucial development during the war. Without the alliance, the two democratic maritime powers would have led to each other's destruction. America had the first-mover advantage in colonies vacated by Britain over the Soviets. If the British facilitated the growth of the American empire, the Americans also used their power to ensure that the British Empire was dismantled with its prestige intact. The alliance helped the global order make a smooth transition from a formal to an informal form of empire.

## Notes

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- 5 Joseph E. Perisco. *Roosevelt's Secret War – FDR and World War II Espionage*, (New York, 2001):130
- 6 Joseph W. Stilwell. *The Stilwell Papers*, (New York, 1948):134
- 7 Rana Mitter. *China's War with Japan – 1937–1945: The Struggle for Survival*, (London, 2013):255
- 8 "China Burma India Theatre of World War II," *The Last Roundup*, April 11, 1946. <http://cbi-theater-5.home.comcast.net/~cbi-theater-5/roundup/roundup041146.html> (Accessed on 12 September 2012). The first issue of *Roundup* was published on 17 September 1942. Over the following three-and-a-half years, a total of 188 issues were published, culminating with *The Last Roundup* on 11 April 1946. Originally titled *CBI Roundup*, it became *India-Burma Theater Roundup* with the 1 February 1945 issue. (The China-Burma-India Theater had been reorganized into the India-Burma Theater and the China Theatre of Operations. *Roundup* continued as the newspaper of the India-Burma Theater).
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- 12 Linda Noreen Bianchi. "United States army nurses in the China-Burma-India theater of World War II, 1942–1945," (PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1990):26



- 13 Stilwell. *The Stilwell Papers*:136–137
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- 17 Yasmin Khan. *The Raj at War: A People’s History of India’s Second World War*, (London, 2015):272
- 18 Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland. *Stilwell’s Command Problems: China-Burma-India Theater*, (Washington, 1956). Also see John Paton Davies Jr. *Dragon by the Tail – American, British, Japanese and Russian Encounters with China and One Another*, (New York, 1972). This is an autobiography of an American Foreign Service officer who was on General Joseph Stilwell’s staff. The book focuses on the CBI theatre and the conflict over command relations between Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and Stilwell.
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- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Clyde Waddell. “Photographs of GIs in Calcutta,” (Exhibit 7, 1945) [www.library.upenn.edu/collections/sasia/calcutta1947/56.html](http://www.library.upenn.edu/collections/sasia/calcutta1947/56.html) (Accessed on 12 July 2015)
- 28 Ibid: (Exhibit 4, 1945)
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- 30 Nirad C. Chaudhuri. *Thy Hand, Great Anarch! India; 1921–1952*, (London, 1987):74
- 31 Ibid: 722
- 32 Dorothy Lane. “An American Looks at Americans in India,” *The Amrita Bazar Patrika*, December 12, 1943
- 33 Clyde Waddell. “Photographs of GIs in Calcutta,” (Exhibit 56, 1945). [www.library.upenn.edu/collections/sasia/calcutta1947/56.html](http://www.library.upenn.edu/collections/sasia/calcutta1947/56.html) (Accessed on 12 July 2015)
- 34 Molesworth. *Curfew on Olympus*:246
- 35 Bianchi. “United States Army Nurses”:204
- 36 Molesworth. *Curfew on Olympus*:246
- 37 “Beer Favorite Drink of Thirsty I-B GI’s,” *The Last Roundup*, April 11, 1946. <http://www.cbi-theater.com/roundup/roundup041146.html> (Accessed on 12 September 2012)



- 38 “Beer Favorite Drink,” *The Last Roundup*.  
39 Ibid.  
40 Molesworth, *Curfew on Olympus*:247  
41 Vest. “Native Words Learned by American Soldiers”:223. Vest lists ten common Hindi and Urdu words that the American troops picked up during their stay in Karachi, New Delhi, Assam, Kashmir and Calcutta, “*malum, baksheesh, teek hai, dhobi, beebee, basha, jeldi, pani, kukri, and khana*”.  
42 Ibid: 224  
43 Ibid.  
44 “I-B Strength to 6,087,” *Chota Roundup*.  
45 The first edition of the *Chota Roundup* was published on 18 April 1946. The editorial read, “This is the first issue of “Chota Roundup.” Its purpose is to carry on the same policies of the old “Roundup” in a smaller, or “*chota*” manner. This initial edition may represent a hodge-podge of Indian-British-American journalism which is the result of haste caused by the move from New Delhi to Calcutta.”  
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47 Ibid: 61  
48 Boyd Sinclair. “The GI’s Sports – Across the Orient,” *Ex-CBI Roundup*, January, 1955. [www.ex-cbi-roundup.com/documents/1955\\_january.pdf](http://www.ex-cbi-roundup.com/documents/1955_january.pdf) (Accessed on 12 June 2015)  
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61 F/N 28/43–45/ War Department/NAI “Case regarding smuggling of quinine belonging to US army medical stores.”  
62 F/92/X/ Foreign and Political Department (hereafter FPD)/NAI: 6. G.A.J Boon the Assistant Director of I&B forwarded the report on April 4, 1944  
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65 Ibid.

- 66 Pran Neville. *India Through American Eyes, 100 Years Ago*, (New Delhi, 2014):IX
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- 70 F/239/20/1944/Pol (I)/Foreign and Political Department (FPD)/NAI. The text of the message from Don Dilion (United Press of America) to their subscribers in India.
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- 74 F/ 20/11/1944/ Pol (I)/FPD/ NAI:14
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- 80 Ibid.
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- 82 F/11/ 19-W/1944/FPD/NAI:6. "Complaint from Chairman Institute of International Relations of Chinese National Military Council." A secret letter General Staff Branch, New Delhi, 27 April 1944 to Lt Col R.R. Burnett.
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- 91 F/ 28/E.P./1945/FPD/NAI:1 "Questions in the legislative Assembly by Mr. Abdul Quiyum regarding Mr. GL Mehta's Speech on publicity in USA."
- 92 Ibid: 5
- 93 F/352-EP/1945/FPD/NAI:3 "Report of Col. Himatsinhji's Publicity Work in USA", filed by T.A. Raman, acting public relations officer, Washington, on 27 June 1945
- 94 Ibid: 15. The GoI Information Services located at 2633, 16th Street N.W. Washington, distributed Charles J. Rolo's "India's Modern Army" in 1945.
- 95 Ibid: 2
- 96 Ibid. The article was titled "Jap Panic in Tokyo Bombing told by Indian Army Colonel".
- 97 Ibid. According to Himatsinhji, after the 'Doolittle raid' by nine planes, he along with sixty-five of his colleagues in the embassy were locked up inside the British embassy, and only once a month would the Swiss minister visit them to check if they were dead or alive.
- 98 Ibid: 3
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 Lal. *British Propaganda in America*:41-42

- 101 Ibid: 44
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- 103 Kate L. Mitchell. "United States Technical Mission to India," *Far Eastern Survey*, vol. 11, March 23, (1942):71
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- 106 Ibid: 81. The report of the Technical Mission was largely accepted by the government of India; however, the member for Education Health and Lands in the governor general's executive council expressed reservations about the proposal to centralize war production in India in a meeting held on 30 May 1942.
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- 112 Aldrich. "American Intelligence and the British Raj," 143
- 113 Ibid: 133
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- 117 Ibid: 189–190
- 118 Paul F. Hooper. "The Institute of Pacific Relations and the Origins of Asian and Pacific Studies," *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 61, Spring, (1988):102. Since the mid-1920s, IPR spearheaded the strategic discussions on US involvement in Asian geopolitics. For the inaugural address of Jawaharlal Nehru, prime minister of India, at the XI Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations on 3 October 1950 at Lucknow, see "Nationalism in Asia," *International Journal*, vol. 6, Winter, (1950/1951):8
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- 121 "Tendentious Propaganda Against Congress in USA, Mr. G.L. Mehta Exposes Agent General's Role," *Hindustan Times*, January 5, 1945
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- 123 Pandit. *The Scope of Happiness*:191
- 124 NMML. *Daily Report of India Affairs*, November 13, 1943.
- 125 Haridas T. Muzumdar. *America's Contribution to India's Freedom*, (Allahabad, 1962):46. Muzumdar returned to independent India and pursued journalism. Anup Singh on his return to India was twice elected to the upper house of parliament and in the 1960s served as the chairman of Punjab Services Commission. After the war, Muzumdar stayed back in the USA and became an academic. J.J. Singh finally left the USA for India in 1959.
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- 132 As quoted in Rebecca Burton Solnit, "The forgotten lobby: Advocates for India in the U.S. during World War II," (PhD dissertation, Dickinson College, 2012):5
- 133 Ibid: 26–27
- 134 *India Today*, IV, February, 1944. According to the report, The government of India's decision to go ahead with the proposed tour was defeated by forty-three votes to thirty-nine on the first adjournment motion which censured it on its unwise decision.
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- 137 Ibid: 13
- 138 Ibid: 252
- 139 Gould. *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies*
- 140 F/50–6/1943/FPD/NAI. "Appointment of Mr. William Phillips, Letter from President Franklin D. Roosevelt to Lord Linlithgow," December 3, 1942.
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- 142 V.D. Chopra. *Pentagon Shadow over India*, (New Delhi, 1985):6. He met prominent Indians like Rajagopalachari, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Jayakar, Jinnah, Shyama Prasad Mukherji and Savarkar.
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- 144 FRUS/ Diplomatic Papers, the Near East, South Asia, and Africa, the Far East, (hereafter India)/1943/vol. IV/ Document 213. "Mr. William Phillips, Personal Representative of President Roosevelt in India, to the Secretary of State, February 19, 1943"
- 145 Ibid: Document 241. "Mr. William Phillips, Personal Representative of President Roosevelt in India, to the President, April 19, 1943."
- 146 Ibid: Document 222. "The Secretary of State to Mr. William Phillips, Personal Representative of President Roosevelt in India, Washington, February 25, 1943"
- 147 FRUS/ India/1944/vol. V/ Document 252. "The British Minister (Campbell) to the Acting Secretary of State Washington, August 8, 1944".
- 148 Ibid: Document 255. "Memorandum of Conversation, by the Assistant Secretary of State (Long) Washington, September 2, 1944."
- 149 Solnit. "The Forgotten Lobby":2
- 150 Gould. *Sikhs, Swamis, Students, and Spies*:318
- 151 Solnit. "The Forgotten Lobby":7
- 152 F/899/F.E./1944/FPD/NAI:4. "Activities of Chaman Lal in USA."
- 153 Chaman Lal. *British Propaganda in America*, (Allahabad, 1945):ix
- 154 F/52/1/1944-Poll (I)/Home Department (HD)/NAI: 22. J.J. Singh's letter to Mrs. V. L. Lakshmi Pandit, 2 Mukherjee Road Allahabad, UP India, October 31, 1944, censored by the Intelligence Bureau
- 155 Ibid: 13–15. J.J. Singh praised himself and said that he was popular among the 4000-odd Indians living in America, barring the doctors, authors, writers and lecturers who considered

- him an outsider in the field of public relations. Singh added, ‘My fault is that I do not call a spade a spade but I call it a bloody shovel’. This made O.K. Caroe remark, ‘This bit about bloody shovel reminds me of the Sikh Punjabi proverb, – “Split a man’s head open with an axe and you have the mouth of a Jat (Sikh)”, fine honest Jat is J.J. Singh.’
- 156 F/899/F.E./1944/FPD/NAI:11
- 157 Ibid.
- 158 Lal. *British Propaganda in America*:IX
- 159 Lal. *British Propaganda in America*:1–2
- 160 Ibid: 2
- 161 Ibid: 40
- 162 F/ 238-X/1944/FPD/NAI: 2. “Alleged reluctance of the Govt. of India to permit the opening of the U.S. Office of Economic Warfare (O.E.W.) in Delhi”. OEW was the economic wing of OSS. The Investigation Bureau (IB) forwarded to the External Affairs Department an extract from *People’s War*, vol. II, no. 42, April 16, (1944), Organ of the Central Committee of CPI, Bombay.
- 163 On 1July 1942, Mahatma Gandhi wrote to Franklin Roosevelt about the Congress party’s stance on Indian independence and involvement in World War II. Gandhi’s letter to FDR was conveyed by Louis Fischer, an American journalist. FDR’s reply was not delivered to Gandhi. On 6 May 1944, Mahatma Gandhi was released from prison and the US revived the process of delivering FDR’s 1942 letter to Gandhi.
- 164 FRUS/India/vol.V/1944/Document 244. “Merrill to the Secretary of the State, July 10, 1944”
- 165 Ibid.
- 166 F/899/F.E./1944/FPD/NAI:8. “Activities of Chaman Lal in USA.”
- 167 Ibid: 10
- 168 Ibid: 9
- 169 Ibid.
- 170 Ibid.
- 171 Nikhil Chakravartty. “The Story of a Gadfly,” *Mainstream*, January 3, 1959. Matthew was elected to Parliament from Kottayam in 1952.
- 172 F/1(14)/ E/1942/FPD/NAI:5
- 173 Ibid: 3. Also see Katherine Frank. *Indira – The Life of Indira Nehru Gandhi*, (New Delhi, 2001):248
- 174 F/1(14)/ E/1942 FPD/NAI:6
- 175 Ibid: 8
- 176 Ibid: 8
- 177 “M.O. Mathai, a Top Official in India During Nehru’s Rule,” *New York Times*, August 31, 1981. [www.nytimes.com/1981/08/31/obituaries/mo-mathai-a-top-official-in-india-during-nehru-s-rule.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1981/08/31/obituaries/mo-mathai-a-top-official-in-india-during-nehru-s-rule.html) (Accessed on 18 September 2013)
- 178 Mundapallil Oommen. Mathai. *Reminiscences of the Nehru Age*, (New Delhi, 1978):1
- 179 As cited in Mobashar Jawed Akbar. *Nehru: The Making of India*, (New Delhi, 2002):513
- 180 Kate Mitchell. “India’s Economic Potential,” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 15, March, (1942):18
- 181 Ibid.
- 182 Ehrman. *Ways of War and the American Experience*:50
- 183 Ibid: 51
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- 185 “Britain’s War Expenditure in India,” *The Eastern Economist*, June 8, 1945
- 186 “Lend-Lease: Its Origin and Development: Part I,” *Bulletin of International News*, vol. 22, January, (1945):56
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- 188 *The Eastern Economist*, February 4, 1944:186
- 189 F/55(4)/AMS/1955/MEA/NAI. “US war surplus stores”

- 190 Ibid.
- 191 Ibid.
- 192 Ibid.
- 193 Ibid.
- 194 FRUS/India/vol. V/1944/.Document 258 “Memorandum of Telephone Conversation, by the Adviser on Political Relations (Murray), January 8, 1944”
- 195 Ibid: Document 261 “Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Calvin H. Oakes of the Division of Middle Eastern Affairs, January 26, 1944.”
- 196 Ibid.
- 197 *The Eastern Economist*, May 31, 1946:899
- 198 F/48(1)/AMS/1957/MEA/NAI: 157. Fortnightly Political Report, May 1–15, vol. I
- 199 Khan. “Sex in an Imperial War Zone”:240

### **3 The New Deal – Indian planning and politics**

#### **The pre-war ideas**

The pre-war and post-war ideas from America formed the bedrock of postcolonial Indian political economy. It was America and not the Soviet Union that guided economic plans, modernization and village development schemes in postcolonial India. America enjoyed the “first mover” advantage in India. Much before the Soviet Union even contemplated building bridges with India; America had ideologically penetrated the minds of dominant classes in India. The Indian elite invited American experts to plan their cities and reform the public administration system. While the Soviet Union was in a bind regarding the nature of Anglo-Indian negotiated separation, America entered Indian hearts by touching its rural life with experts armed with development projects.

In the 1930s, the reverberations of capitalist reforms in America were felt by Indian nationalists charting the political and economic philosophy for independent India. Three American ideas imbibed by Indian nationalists—the New Deal, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and civil liberties – had significant impact on postcolonial India. The New Deal was a mixed-economy magic wand that was used without the guilt of remaining moored to Western capitalism. The TVA was a blueprint for big dams that was copied to create “temples of modern India”. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) provided an antidote to class antagonism. This pre-war package from America gave India its postcolonial ideology.

The First World War established American centrality in the new world order.<sup>1</sup> The Great Depression was the next big global crisis, which aggravated British banking problems and accelerated the rise of America.<sup>2</sup>

However, Great Depression made capitalism look uglier and threatened to halt the rise of America. In 1933 when President Franklin. D. Roosevelt came to power, the unemployment rate in America was around 25 per cent, the farmer's debt crisis was looming large and industrial production was drastically down.<sup>3</sup> Britain, a jaded empire, was incapable of saving capitalism and the international maritime order. With the world-economy turned upside down, FDR used the serious crisis situation to make American capitalism look attractive. America took up cudgels to save capitalism and plunged into the battlefield of ideas armed with notions of liberal modernization.<sup>4</sup> The American ideology of development drew on 'Keynesian theory to unleash the power of public financing and internationalize capitalism'.<sup>5</sup>

American capitalism repackaged as the 'New Deal', promised uplifting the underprivileged through public-private participation.<sup>6</sup> The New Deal became the symbol of capitalist innovation and best political practices. According to Hardt and Negri, with the New Deal legislation, FDR 'resolved the contradictions of American progressivism by forging a synthesis of the American imperialist vocation and reformist capitalism represented by Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson'.<sup>7</sup>

The New Deal model became a 'flag that the US army raised throughout the course of the Second World War'.<sup>8</sup> It was offered as an 'alternative successor model to the crisis of European imperialism'.<sup>9</sup> Such was the appeal of the New Deal that Nehru said, 'We want many New Deals in India too'.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1930s, the colonies looking for freedom had three international models to look up to. One was the American New Deal model, second, Hitler's model based on fascism and the third was Stalin's Soviet model wedded to communism. The common element between the three models was modernization and industrialization. The three agreed on the primacy of the state in guiding the economy; however, they differed on the degree of state intervention in the economy and their adherence to democratic norms. An element of socialism was an inherent part of all the three models. Since



German fascism was a pariah on the international political stage, the real choice was between FDR's New Deal or Keynesian socialism and Soviet communism. As Asoka Mehta, an Indian liberal said, 'in the thirties men of intelligence were either socialists or fascists. We were socialists'.<sup>11</sup>

The American answer to fascist and communist models of modernization and development was contained in ideas like the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) that involved 'large-scale planning, ground-breaking technologies, and social transformation'.<sup>12</sup>

In 1933, America established TVA,<sup>13</sup> a multipurpose river valley development (MPRVD) project that introduced new techniques in flood control and exploitation of vast water resources for electricity generation. Rohan D'Souza posits that the MPRVD in the United States came up in context of the New Deal's zeal to 'restructure capitalism through Keynesian inspired state-directed planning'<sup>14</sup> and by giving fresh impetus to industrialization. This required conversion of dams into 'symbols of modernization, national prestige and of human dominance over nature'.<sup>15</sup> Lilienthal's book *TVA: Democracy on the March* played a crucial role in the 'romanticisation of the TVA' and projecting it as a model of grassroots democracy, where centralization of policy and decentralization of implementation worked in tandem.<sup>16</sup>

The US State Department spotted an opportunity to project 'American technical assistance and financial largesse to newly independent states'.<sup>17</sup> The US Bureau of Reclamation sold the idea and 'technical knowledge on water resource development to roughly 108 countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America'.<sup>18</sup> Sneddon posits that this massive engagement of US water experts was driven by US geopolitical imperatives to convince the 'Third World' that 'allying with the West in Cold War struggles was to their benefit'.<sup>19</sup>

The idea of TVA reached India as the Damodar Valley project. Its Chinese version was Yangtze Valley Authority (YVA). In August 1937, the Indian National Congress set up an expert committee to study the question of MPRVD and industrialization in India.<sup>20</sup> One of the first projects cleared in post-independent India was the Damodar Valley project.

The third big idea was rooted in the ideology of ACLU, the legal arm of modern liberalism, established in 1920 by Roger Baldwin. Restructuring

society through legal battles for human rights and civil liberties in the United States formed the core of ACLU. Its aim was to promote Americanism, as Baldwin said at the time of its inception,

We want to get a good lot of flags, talk a good deal about the Constitution and what our forefathers wanted to make of this country, and to show that we are really the folks that really stand for the spirit of our institutions.<sup>21</sup>

The International Committee of Political Prisoners, an international affiliate of ACLU, helped America connect with anti-colonial struggles in various parts of the world. Since World War I, Baldwin was connected to the Indian freedom struggle in New York. His interest in Indian anti-colonial struggle increased after he met Nehru at the Brussels Conference in 1927.<sup>22</sup>

Popular history, which tends to ignore Nehru's interactions with American Progressives, believes that after the Brussels Conference, Nehru became a radical communist. However, the fact is that his interactions with American Fabians at Brussels distanced Nehru from communism and made him a devout liberal. Nehru's dislike for radical left came to the fore when he ruthlessly dealt with them in 1950. Commenting on Nehru having a soft corner for communists, Vincent Sheean wrote,

To suppose that Mr. Nehru has a weakness for communism is arrant nonsense. He has been personally responsible and has publicly accepted responsibility for the imprisonment without trial of practically every India communist organizer or agitator of any consequence. The number is not precisely known. It changes constantly. But I heard that some 12000 to 15000 communists are in prison. This is done with the utmost security and without trial, habeas corpus or any other constitutional safeguard which are observed in the U.S.<sup>23</sup>

Besides introducing India to libertarians, American also brought in Lovestonites and Trotskyites to Indian political landscape. Jayaprakash Narayan (JPN), who had learnt his Marxism directly from Jay Lovestone, was the cornerstone of the anti-communist Socialist front in India.

In 1942, the Workers Party of America published a book titled *India in Revolt*, which announced the launch of the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India in May 1942. The formation of the party had been in progress since the war began in 1939.<sup>24</sup> Representatives of workers' organizations from Bombay, Bengal, United Provinces and Ceylon attended the first party-conference.<sup>25</sup> The guiding principle behind the formation of a revolutionary party was Leon Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution'.<sup>26</sup> Post-independence, the Bolshevik-Leninist Party of India merged with the Congress Socialist Party led by JPN. Later, this stream played an important role in India's labour movement.

## **The post-war package**

The American strategy to enhance its prestige and power came to be identified as the 'American Century'.<sup>27</sup> Post war, the idea of 'American Century' catapulted to the next level by transmitting 'viable political ideas and institutions'<sup>28</sup> to the decolonized world. Ekbladh narrates the launch of the Truman Doctrine and the 1949 'Point Four Program' in newly independent sovereign entities with the support of philanthropic and international organizations, universities and even missionaries.<sup>29</sup> The Indian missionaries stationed in America were equally enthusiastic about Americanism reaching Indian shores. For example, one year after independence, Swami Akhilananda of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society of Massachusetts wrote to JPN, explaining that

There is a great possibility of complete imitation of the educational model of the West in India. Both India and China are likely to imitate either Anglo-American or Russian ideology or practice of philosophy of life. It seems to me our leaders should also be thoroughly acquainted with the thoughts of the constructive thinkers of America. In case you are interested in reading these books ... I shall be happy to send them to you.<sup>30</sup>

Americanism in its post-war avatar penetrated the Indian governance model. The next big idea that captured India's imagination was the Community Development (CD) programme. The idea of stimulating communities to 'develop better standards and ways of living through their own efforts' was promoted through US government and non-government channels.<sup>31</sup> It claimed to be the American way to make modernization reach the most backward communities living in rural areas of the global South. According to Immerwahr, India was one of the first to adopt 'the ideological components of CD and many of its basic practices. The Philippines, for its part, served as a testing ground for CD as a form of counterinsurgency'.<sup>32</sup> Peace Corps, another agency associated with the concept of CD, penetrated Indian villages in early 1960s.

India's commitment to the ideas of mixed economy, modernization and civil liberties introduced left-liberalism in Indian politics that neither adhered to classical liberalism, which clings to free markets, nor was it classical left, which believes in class struggle. It also gave India an economic model based on a 'socialistic pattern' supported by America, as John Lewis, an American economist, appropriately commented, 'the edifice of Indian socialism in the 1950s and 1960s was built with massive American aid'.<sup>33</sup>

### *American inspiration for Indian planning*

Economic planning was not the sole preserve of the Soviets. During the worst phase of recession in 1933, the cult of planning emerged among American economists. A World Economic Congress was held at Amsterdam in 1931, and the International Relations Institute published conference papers under the title 'World Social Economic Planning'.<sup>34</sup> The 36th session of the American Academy of Political Science focused on national and world planning. By 1932, both the socialist and capitalist planning assumed 'band wagon' proportions. Commenting on the popularity of planning in America, Blanchard wrote, 'The American Federation of Labour, *The New Republic*, Governor FDR and the United States Chamber of Commerce have all climbed on the wagon. Even President Herbert Hoover has climbed on the wagon'.<sup>35</sup>

It is during this phase that the planning philosophy made inroads into India. In 1934, M. Visvesvaraya, one-time chief administrator of Mysore and pioneer of industrialization in South India, published a national plan that talked about enhanced industrial investments to double national income in a decade.

The genesis of the National Planning Committee is traceable to a conference of ministers of industries held in Delhi in October 1938 under the chairmanship of Subhas Chandra Bose that appointed the National Planning Committee (NPC).<sup>36</sup> The first NPC meeting was held at Bombay with Nehru in chair in December 1938. Political uncertainties coupled with imprisonment of key Congress leaders following the 'Quit India' movement prevented the functioning of the NPC until 1945. A new National Planning Commission set up in February 1950 with Prime Minister Nehru in chair.<sup>37</sup>

Khagendra N. Sen published an elaborate and comprehensive study of economic planning in India in 1939.<sup>38</sup> Prior to this, there were only two serious studies of planning in India, one by M. Visvesvaraya and the other by S.C. Mitter. Sen's 500-page book with a foreword by Jawaharlal Nehru brought out the international influences that made planning in India inevitable. He covered issues ranging from 'planning the plan' to plans for every sector of the economy, covering even air power. Sen had studied Arthur Salter's *A Scheme for an Economic Advisory Organization in India* that gave a summary of national economic organizations and legislations in different countries. Sen's work was inspired by earlier writings on the subject by H.J. Laski, Henry Strackosch and G.D.H. Cole, Basil Blackett, Harold Macmillan and M.J. Keynes.<sup>39</sup> He studied works on Russian planning as well as the views on the National Recovery Administration in America, including an authoritative analytical review by President FDR.<sup>40</sup>

Sen explained the rise of economic nationalism in the background of protectionism that followed the First World War, the Great Depression and the concomitant fall in world trade. He stressed that the breakdown of the competitive system of trade was a temporary phenomenon.<sup>41</sup> He predicted that free trade coordinated by international agreements would eventually win. Sen, therefore, recommended a system of planning intricately linked to 'international bearings'.<sup>42</sup> Dismissing the need to have 'exact parallelism' between the Russian and the Indian plans, Sen argued that unlike Russia,

India neither had a coordinated system of control nor a national government that enjoyed unrestricted freedom to implement its economic policies.<sup>43</sup>

Another book that came out in 1939 on planning was *Economic Planning in India* by Sundara V. Rajan of Baroda College. Rajan argued in favour of planned capitalism and believed that for planning to be successful, it had to be on 'a world scale', where cosmopolitanism triumphed over nationalism. Rajan identified different degrees in planning, ranging from communistic planning in Russia to capitalistic planning in the USA. He also gave the example of the Italian plan in which 'the state did not kill private enterprise and profit motive'. Rajan stressed that centralized state control of production was the essence of economic planning.<sup>44</sup> He was impressed with the New Deal model, which he considered a well-thought out strategy to restore the pre-crisis prosperity in the United States. Rajan posited that the marketing of agricultural produce was central to rural prosperity. He presented 'co-operative marketing' models from the USA and Denmark as the ideal for India to emulate.<sup>45</sup> According to Rajan, USA provided a 'striking example' in usage of machinery to enhance crop output.<sup>46</sup> In 1945, K.B. Krishna wrote in his book that

The Indian plan should avoid communistic tendencies; its basic policy should be to encourage collective effort without interfering with individual initiative. The development should be more on the lines followed in the United States of America and in Turkey.<sup>47</sup>

It is a paradox that despite these well-documented American influences on Indian planning, the credit for economic planning in India is normally given to 'Nehruvian strategy'<sup>48</sup> perceived to be imported from the Soviet Union. As *The Economist* writes, 'India published its seventh economic plan. Its preface said planning was a "precious gift" from Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, who had been an admirer of Soviet economics'.<sup>49</sup>

Bidyut Chakrabarty posits, 'Contrary to Gandhi's explicit opposition, the Congress party showed ample interest in socialist means, including planning and heavy industrialization'.<sup>50</sup> Chakrabarty identifies three different sources from which Nehru derived the idea of planning – first, the national democratic ideology – to protect India's economic future after the termination of British rule. Second, the Congress resolutions supporting

planned economic development. The third source of inspiration for Nehru was the Soviet Union, which achieved tremendous economic success in a short time through disciplined implementation of its plans. To support his argument Chakrabarty uses Nehru's letter to his daughter, Indira, where he mentions that

The argument about the success or otherwise of the Five-Year Plan is rather pointless. The answer to it is really the present state of the Soviet Union. And a further answer is the fact that this plan has impressed itself on the imagination of the world. Everybody talks of 'Planning' now ... the Soviets have put magic into the word.<sup>51</sup>

Chakrabarty's analysis omits the fact that Soviet Union was not the only one to advocate centralized planning; the idea had gained salience even among the anti-communists. As Prabhat Patnaik says,

so pervasive was the felt need for planning across the ideological spectrum that in 1944 alongside the Bombay Plan, two other plans came out: a "People's Plan" authored by M.N. Roy representing a Left position, and a "Gandhian Plan" authored by Shriman Narain visualizing a self-sufficient village economy.<sup>52</sup>

The idea of planning was so popular that even Deendayal Upadhyaya, the leader of the Hindu Right, felt the need to prevent its projection as a communist gift to the world. Upadhyaya believed that planning was not the monopoly of the communists and its initiation by the USSR did not prevent the United States and the United Kingdom from accepting it.<sup>53</sup> Upadhyaya quoted W.W. Rustow to bring home the point that

It was a minor irony ... that United States agents both in Europe and the underdeveloped countries, who were not necessarily New Dealers or Socialists ended up advocating a greater role for planning, especially, in the areas where American interests were involved.<sup>54</sup>

Upadhyaya was convinced that this was not a conspiracy because not just the New Dealers in the American foreign policy establishment but advisers

of all hues –

the team of experts from international banks or other international agencies including the Colombo plan, officials of the American Point Four Program, private foundations and consultant firms, independent social scientists; journalists and visiting politicians – all recommended central planning as the first condition for progress to the underdeveloped countries.<sup>55</sup>

Nehru did acknowledge the success of Soviet plans, but when it came to adopting one for India, he preferred Western advice. Writing in 1961, Hause argued ‘socialism that the Congress and its leaders are designing is from a Western model, more Fabian than Marxian; probably more socialism is preached than is practiced’.<sup>56</sup> The inspiration for a nationalized economy, according to Hause, came to India from the West, and hundreds of Western experts had a voice in various stages of Indian planning. Dr Solomon Trone, an American expert, guided India’s economic planning.<sup>57</sup> Trone recommended the setting up of the National Planning Commission in 1949.<sup>58</sup> Incidentally, the National Planning Commission, considered a relic of the socialist era, was dismantled by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi regime in early 2015.

American involvement in India’s economic planning ran deep. According to Lewis, ‘India’s development program was the first and in many ways the most significant non-communist economic experiment in Asia. America had a vital stake in India’s attempt to achieve radical economic transformation by constitutional procedures’.<sup>59</sup>

In early March 1952, Chester Bowles presented to the Indian government a memorandum titled “The Indo-American Development Program – The Problems and Opportunities” that initiated direct American involvement in India’s agricultural plans. Bowles praised the first five-year plan for recognizing food as India’s major problem.<sup>60</sup> He strongly recommended that India seek self-sufficiency in the agriculture sector and expressed American willingness to complement India’s development efforts in ‘the fields of irrigation works, construction of indigenous fertilizer plant capacity, and the development of quality agricultural extension service’.<sup>61</sup>



India's socialist planning was half-hearted; it was not supported by extensive political and institutional changes.<sup>62</sup> According to Patnaik, planning in India used 'socialist rhetoric and its vision of public sector as permanent' only to facilitate capitalist development without radical land redistribution.<sup>63</sup>

### *TVA and the Damodar Valley project*

The TVA guided the Indian Economic Planning Commission that studied the problems of water and land resources in the river valleys.<sup>64</sup> The 1940 report of the River Training and Irrigation Subcommittee of the NPC recommended the creation of a statutory authority along the lines of TVA to deal with the problem of 'river training' in each of the major river basins, prone to frequent floods.<sup>65</sup>

Besides undertaking the Damodar Valley and Bhakra Dam projects, preliminary investigations were also initiated on Kosi, Narbada, Tapti, Sabarmati, C.P. and Berar river works, Bastar state rivers, the Assam Valley and Coorg River Valley projects'.<sup>66</sup>

A study of the MPRVD in India by D'Souza argues that the origin and development of large dams and planning in India was 'a part of a particular political moment'.<sup>67</sup> He sees this as a rare moment where Indian political leadership, capital as well the British rulers in India acted in unison to promote the concept of TVA. The idea about the replication of TVA in Damodar Valley was mooted in March 1944. Lord Halifax, British ambassador to the US, was instrumental in hiring W.L. Voorduin, an American senior engineer on the staff of the TVA as head of the Damodar Valley project.<sup>68</sup>

However, not everyone in London was enthusiastic about the idea of TVA gaining salience in India. TVA brought American capital, technology and technicians to India, and this was considered detrimental to British domination of India. On 26 October 1945, the India Office in London sent a compilation of papers that carried criticisms of the TVA to the Board of Trade with instructions to circulate them as a 'counterblast' to American propaganda.<sup>69</sup>

Much in tune with the thinking in London, *Capital*, a British-controlled economic newspaper published from Calcutta, criticized TVA. It

highlighted the misconceptions about TVA being a socialist undertaking and stated that actually it was 'the creation of society that is doggedly and aggressively capitalist in every way'.<sup>70</sup> TVA was criticized for its high costs, which also involved high capital and operational expenditure as well as interest payments to the government. *Capital* further alleged that TVA was completely out of proportion to the cost of similar hydroelectric projects – and the low cost of electricity made available by TVA did not result in the the increases in 'manufacturing activity and individual incomes'.<sup>71</sup>

On the other hand, *The Eastern Economist*, owned by the Indian business tycoon Birla, praised TVA for increasing the manufacturing plants as well as industrial wage earners in the valley by 53.4 and 41.7 per cent respectively. In comparison, in the same period from 1933 to 1939, the corresponding percentages of the increase in the whole of the USA were only 30 and 30.2 per cent. The newspaper also gave a favourable account of TVA during war for production of large quantities of ammonia, ammonium nitrate and phosphorous for munitions and calcium carbide for synthetic rubber. Freezing and dehydration techniques introduced by TVA food preservation was positively commented upon by the newspaper.<sup>72</sup>

'By 1953, more than 39 million people from across the world visited the TVA. The number of professional visitors from South Asia, especially from India and Pakistan was particularly large and contributed to the diffusion both in terms of technology and ideas'.<sup>73</sup> Asoka Mehta, a socialist leader wrote that TVA was apolitical and non-partisan and did not impose from above a comprehensive plan for the economic and social life of the valley.<sup>74</sup> He wrote this in 1953 in order to allay the fears of some Indian capitalists who believed that autonomous TVA supported a strong central government.

Nehru with full faith in the American experts was in the forefront promoting big dams. In 1948, the sub-committee of the cabinet dealing with the Bhakra Dam project decided to increase the dam height for supplying water to Bikaner. This necessitated revision of original designs prepared in America by the International Engineering Co. of Denver, Colorado. Despite higher costs and the paucity of foreign exchange required for engaging Americans and sending Indian engineers to America, the cabinet preferred the American firm to the local company.<sup>75</sup>

Records reveal that in May 1949, Krishna Menon, then India's high commissioner in the UK, sent a letter to the prime minister's office along with a note by London's Mitchell Engineering Group that contained 'serious criticism of Bhakra Dam work'.<sup>76</sup> Mitchell Group's comments were dismissed by AN Khosla, head of the Bhakra Dam project. Nehru too reposed full trust in TVA experts and their advice on large dams. Nehru's note of 16 September 1949 to his secretariat explicitly stated, 'If Dr. J.L. Savage has approved of this scheme [Bhakra Dam], that is a substantial reason for considering it sound'.<sup>77</sup> Nehru emphasized that he was advised by Trone to seek assistance from an American firm 'fully experienced in the building of high dams'. Since the British company recommended by Menon had no experience of building big dams, Nehru wrote, 'it may be said that Americans have experience. They are expensive but in a matter of this kind a risk cannot be taken'.<sup>78</sup>

Nehru's commitment to the philosophy of modernization and his political acumen led him to popularize and sell the idea of large dams to the Indian masses. He identified them as 'temples of modern India', adding a touch of India to an idea imported from the West.

### *America in Indian rural sector*

Besides India's industrial capacity, America took keen interest in Indian rural areas. The Rockefeller Foundation, which was deeply involved in agricultural and health research, established its presence in Indian villages. It was much before India became independent that rural reconstruction centres were started under the tutelage of the YMCA.<sup>79</sup> One such programme named Martandam in Travancore state was headed by Dr Spencer Hatch. The Rockefeller Foundation was associated with the *Martandam* project that provided trained doctors for tackling cholera and malaria in the villages.<sup>80</sup> Hatch encouraged high-profile visitors to showcase the project. In his book *Further Upward in Rural India* (1938), he mentions the visit of the famous author Major Francis Yeats-Brown (*Dogs of War* and *Bengal Lancer*). Brown wrote about activities at *Martandam* in the 15 May 1930 issue of *Spectator*.<sup>81</sup>

Hatch believed that the rural reconstruction programme by missionaries in India, Burma and Ceylon had God's guidance. He considered it akin to

Theodore Roosevelt's 'American Country Life' Commission that resulted in making rural life 'more prosperous and happy' and uplifting the 'whole rural populace from the hayseed stage to one of equality'.<sup>82</sup> In 1945, the Indian Village Service (IVS) started a pioneering project in the field of rural reconstruction at Marehra in Uttar Pradesh.

One of the first programmes of the Ford Foundation in India was the International Farm youth exchange programme, which was sponsored in 1948 by the 4H Club Foundation of the USA. India's participation in the programme started from 1953 onwards. In 1957, forty-eight countries were a part of the project that intended to develop leadership through the exchange of young farmers.<sup>83</sup> The programme involved the participants living and working with farm families in their host country. Along the lines of the 4H Club, the Kisan Bal Sangh, Mangal Dal and Kamal Dal were started under the IVS schemes to prepare young people to be able farmers and good citizens.

Until 1957, the Indian government did not incur any expenditure for participation in the 4H Club. A total of 135 boys and 41 girls went to the USA between 1953 and 1958. In comparison, during the same period (1953–58) only 39 boys and 13 girls came from the USA on exchange visits to India.<sup>84</sup> The national 4H Club Foundation subsidized the programme from the grant given by the Ford Foundation. In 1959, the Ford Foundation withdrew support to the programme. At this stage, the 4H Club informed India that they had the capacity to fund the visit of only two Indian farmers to the USA. In 1959, when the burden of sending farmers started falling on the exchequer, India suspended its club membership.

Albert Mayer, a New York architect, planner and advocate of new towns, worked for the US Army Corps of Engineers in Bengal during the war. In October 1945, Mayer stayed at Nehru's house in Allahabad, where they enjoyed 'bull sessions' – long exchanges of views<sup>85</sup> – and discussed pioneering CD programmes in the Indian rural sector. After an exploratory tour of Indian villages in 1946, Mayer was convinced that an integrated rural development program had to be initiated in India, as the earlier developmental efforts of the government, missionaries and Gandhian 'constructive workers' were inadequate.<sup>86</sup> Nehru introduced Mayer to Pandit G.B. Pant, chief minister of Uttar Pradesh in 1946, who invited Mayer to begin working in his state. Mayer advised on 'various matters

relating to planning, village reconstruction and the ordered development of community life' in rural areas.<sup>87</sup>

In 1948, Mayer chose Etawah in Uttar Pradesh for his pilot development project.<sup>88</sup> The aim of the Etawah project was to ensure increased food production and to improve general welfare of the inhabitants. Each area was to cover 300 villages and 200,000 people. The focus was on irrigation and supplying needed fertilizers.<sup>89</sup> Mayer moved with an aim to promote 'inner democratization' that would challenge village hierarchies and encourage greater local participation.<sup>90</sup> Mayer also introduced Village Level Worker (VLF) based on the concept of medical corpsmen in the US Army. The job of the VLF in Etawah was to monitor various projects in progress and to act as a link between the government and the villagers.<sup>91</sup> Mayer appointed a 'rural life analyst', an anthropologist, to study and analyse the rural responses to changes in their environment.<sup>92</sup> Besides starting a rural newspaper, he also set up a 'Planning Research and Action Institute in Lucknow to experiment with new practices and to make ongoing evaluations of the project's success'.<sup>93</sup> Indian rural life with communication channels, intelligence gathering and its analyses apparatus was organized on military lines. The use of anthropologists was something similar to what the OSS had done during the Second World War to comprehend and analyse available intelligence.

Besides the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations the American embassy in India also participated in community development projects. Paul Hoffman, the first president of the Ford Foundation from 1951 to 1953, 'believed that world peace might well be determined by what happened in India'.<sup>94</sup> In 1951, Hoffman visited India and met Prime Minister Nehru three times. The primary interest of the Ford Foundation rested in Indian villages and community development projects, which received \$3,725,000 funding from the foundation in 1951.<sup>95</sup> S.K. Dey, a former employee of the General Electric Corporation, spearheaded the Indian Community Development project; in 1956, he became the minister of the Community Development Programme.

The arrival of Chester Bowles as American ambassador to New Delhi in November 1951 gave a further boost to CD perspectives. On 2 October 1952, the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Indian government launched a nationwide CD programme in collaboration with the Ford

Foundation. The detailed budget for these projects was incorporated into the five-year plans. The Indo-American Development Program, a holistic rural improvement programme of CD, encompassed all the arrangements for training Indian personnel and hiring, equipping and maintaining American personnel associated with it. It also included public health work, obtaining basic equipment and raw material for local industries (brick kiln, small foundries for agriculture implements, cottage industries etc.) and construction of rural-urban community centres.<sup>96</sup>

In 1953, another rural regeneration scheme under the name of National Extension Service was started.<sup>97</sup> The programme began with fifty-five project areas all over the country covering a little over 25,000 villages and a population of close to sixteen and a half million people. The four-year programme envisaged coverage of one-fourth of the 310 million rural population of India living in 550,000 villages.<sup>98</sup>

The basic scheme was that several villages were grouped together around a central key village containing various facilities that included a market, a clinic and veterinary services. Central to a group of units, a settlement was to be developed in a small industrial town so that a relationship could be established between industry and agriculture at a fairly local level. As with TVA, the approach was through decentralization and working through institutions. In this case, the village council or *panchayat* was the local body that encouraged villagers to improve their sanitation and housing, build roads and learn scientific agriculture.

T. Swaminathan, minister of economics of the Indian High Commission in the United Kingdom, justified CD projects by stating that they were needed to ‘make the ordinary man feel that we had an eye on a goal and that despite the long and arduous road, we were on the way’. And this assurance was essential to prevent disillusionment against the democratic way of life.<sup>99</sup>

So popular were development models from America that even private investors were entertained by India to present their community development projects. Manny Strauss of the National Planning Association in the United States was one such investor who evinced interest in India.<sup>100</sup> C.D. Deshmukh, India’s financial representative in Europe and America, in 1949 credited Strauss with ‘an unusually fertile brain, experience of propaganda and public relations’. In his recommendation to the prime minister,

Deshmukh narrated Strauss's ideas of using American know-how to develop an Indian town with a population of 25,000–50,000 as a model of all-around progress.<sup>101</sup> The two strong elements in Strauss's developmental idea were planning and peace, which Deshmukh thought would appeal to Nehru and also be of propaganda value in India and America. The idea was discussed by the cabinet committee but nothing concrete came out of it.

### *The Peace Corps*

The Peace Corps, another US “boutique” agency, made an entry into India's rural sector, in 1961. It was ‘one of the smallest instruments in the foreign policy toolkit of the United States’ and was created to ‘win hearts and minds in the non-aligned developing countries’.<sup>102</sup> Robert Sargent Shriver, brother-in-law of President John F. Kennedy, was the director of the Peace Corps. It was neither a charity nor an aid organization that disbursed cash for projects. Besides building intercultural understanding and acting as a broadcaster of the culture of capitalism and modernization, it was to act as eyes and ears of the US empire in remote locations of the ‘dark world’. Its leadership was largely drawn from a pool of top community development professionals. Shriver, along with Harris Wofford, special assistant to President Kennedy, visited India in early May 1961 to sell the Peace Corps project.<sup>103</sup> He discussed the gradual implementation of the programme with Prime Minister Nehru and suggested making a small beginning from Punjab, where ten to twelve young Peace Corps volunteers could be placed.<sup>104</sup>

The level of skill and the age of the Peace Corps volunteers became a point of discussion in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Foreign Secretary M.J. Desai wanted senior subject matter experts from America because he felt India had young or middle-aged technicians in abundance.<sup>105</sup> However, some MEA officials preferred young Peace Corps volunteers because of their bad experience with highly skilled American experts imported under the US Technical Cooperation Mission (TCM) scheme of 1952. TCM experts canvassed ideas among ministries and organizations, which often led to demand for more experts irrespective of ‘whether or not there was any real need for such experts and whether or not we were in a position to make effective use of their services’.<sup>106</sup> One

official focused on the need to guard against the individual ministries carelessly sponsoring requests for Peace Corps personnel.<sup>107</sup>

Not just the politicians but bureaucrats too were keen to draw personal mileage from schemes. For example, A.L. Fletcher, financial commissioner (Development) of the Punjab government, was selected to go to the USA to select Peace Corps volunteers for Punjab. All expenses for his travel and stay in the USA were paid by the United States. A deputy secretary in the MEA felt that Punjab government rather than the US government should meet Fletcher's expenses. He also raised a pertinent question about the very need to send Fletcher to the USA, for a job that a high-ranking official of the Indian embassy in the United States could accomplish.<sup>108</sup>

Nehru, who was keen to see the Peace Corps proposal rolling, asserted,

I do not particularly like the idea of senior officers of ours going to United States to work as a member of the panel. However, as this has been agreed to, we might accept it. The officer going there is not doing so just for sightseeing, but to do a specific piece of work for the US government. In view of this there need be no objection to the US government paying his passage money and probably other money involved.<sup>109</sup>

The government of India utilized the Peace Corps volunteers in such fields as engineering colleges, training of teachers in craftsmen centres, soil conservation projects and rural institutes.<sup>110</sup> The first batch of Peace Corps volunteers was in New Delhi for orientation from 16 to 20 April 1962. By 1965, some 400 Peace Corps workers were stationed in India, and five Indians were sent to live in American slums for one year to participate in President Johnson's 'war on poverty'. The idea of 'Reverse Peace Corps', was born of a suggestion made by Sargent Shriver and on the initiative of Asoka Mehta, deputy chairman of the Indian Planning Commission, and Chester Bowles, the US Ambassador to India.<sup>111</sup>

[\*The Appleby pill\*](#)



American expertise was not limited to rural work, economy and philanthropic work; it also extended to constitutional and administrative reforms. The private papers of Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, a prominent Congress party leader and a close aide of Mahatma Gandhi, reveal that as early as 1939, S.L. Joshi,<sup>112</sup> a professor in the US, approached her offering consultancy in the field of public administration. On 9 February 1939, Joshi briefed Kaur on the adult education programme of Britain and America and suggested organizing month-long workshops at Simla, Pune and Octacamund for an open discussion of all public questions between the representatives of all public bodies and the British bureaucracy. This method, Joshi suggested,

will powerfully help to mould public opinion and clarify many issues which remain befogged in the cloudy atmosphere of communal partisanship. An enterprise of this kind can be supported by public spirited men and women who can supply funds for such a purpose.<sup>113</sup>

After attainment of independence, the government of India engaged the services of American bureaucrat Paul H. Appleby to prepare reports on administration and governance standards in India. His first report, submitted to the government in 1953, funded by the Ford Foundation, was a general survey of public administration in India. This report highlighted a new perspective on organization and methods (O&M) within the Indian administration. The O&M division of the cabinet secretariat looked after Appleby's stay and facilitated his interviews and field study in India.<sup>114</sup>

Appleby's second detailed report, "Re-examination of India's Administrative System with Special Reference to Administration of Government's Industrial and Commercial Enterprises", was presented to the prime minister in 1956. Recommendations pertaining to the functioning of Parliament, the role of comptroller and auditor general (CAG) of India and the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) were studied by parliamentarians. Members of Parliament, like Tarkeshwari Sinha and C.P. Matthen, requested the prime minister to initiate a discussion on the report in the Lok Sabha.<sup>115</sup> Nehru wanted more time before discussing the report in the parliament. He wrote to Tarkeshwari Sinha on 16 August 1956 stating,

I am glad the Appleby report is being studied by M.Ps. It deserves a discussion, but I doubt if we can find time in this session of parliament. As it is we can hardly find time to continue discussion of our second Five Year Plan. Apart from this, I think it would be better for this matter to be considered fully before we discuss it in house.<sup>116</sup>

Despite Nehru's reluctance, on 13 September 1956, the lower house held a two-hour discussion on the Appleby report. Nehru wanted more time, since he had sent the Appleby report along with a report on Community Development to London for review by Thomas Balogh, professor of economics at the University of Oxford.<sup>117</sup>

The feedback from Balogh appreciated Appleby's remarks on recruitment and training. However, he criticized the report by stating that Appleby's findings were 'deeply influenced not only by his American background but what is perhaps even more dangerous, by his specific New York experience'.<sup>118</sup> The twin factors according to Balogh were 'the direct opposite of the requirements of sound administration in India'.<sup>119</sup> Balogh was especially critical of the fact that Appleby had 'altogether missed the point of Treasury control and that he could not appreciate its importance'.<sup>120</sup> Balogh felt that financial budgeting problems were secondary; the main issue was to achieve maximum rate of progress by tackling physical bottlenecks. He was of the opinion that the 'primary and expansive planning' must be the domain of the Planning Commission and not the Ministry of Finance. Besides, offering an extensive critique of Appleby's report on many other fronts, Balogh severely criticized the report for being 'convinced that the so-called presidential system is the right way of dealing with the matters'. Balogh felt that by trying to imitate the American model, India was treading the wrong path. He finally wrote:

I have been impressed by the danger (vividly evoked to me by reading these two reports, both of them sponsored by Ford Foundation) of Indian government receiving too much advice on the basis of American experience. India does not resemble America and in ways I devoutly hope she will never resemble her. I do hope that wealth in India will be used not for conspicuous competitiveness but to mitigate poverty, and

after that has been accomplished to increase leisure. I feel that in many ways the experience of the North-Western European Socialists are more germane to Indian problems, and it is a pity if those experiences could not be fully utilized.<sup>121</sup>

### *Mapping Indian minerals*

In 1952, India was already exporting over a million tons of manganese to the United States.<sup>122</sup> Despite in-house expertise in the mining sector, India chose to rely upon American expertise and financial support. In 1954, Nehru approved a proposal by A.M. Bateman, professor of geology at Yale University and editor of the journal *Economic Geology*, for a comprehensive mineral survey of India. In 1956, the National Coal Development Corporation Ltd. (NCDC) was set up.<sup>123</sup> However, it continued to rely on American consultants. In October 1963, the Indian government sanctioned the development of four coal mining projects at Singrauli, Umer, Kathara and Swang.<sup>124</sup> In order to meet the foreign exchange requirements for these projects, India applied for a loan from the US for approximately \$30 million.<sup>125</sup> However, one of the prerequisites for securing the loan was that US consultants had to be hired for technical supervision and evaluation of the project.

The Indian engineers had prepared project reports for all the four mines, yet a 'US firm was tasked to study all geological data, core drilling records, render advice on plans and equipment procurement to ensure the development of mines in accordance with American mining standards and practices'.<sup>126</sup>

The precondition attached to the support was that India could not seek consultancy from any other country except the US. Pierce Management Corporation was the US consultancy firm that got the contract for Indian mines. The same company had earlier prepared the entire report in respect of the Ramgarh mines and other NCDC schemes.<sup>127</sup> The cost of the consultancy excluding air travel and accommodation costs of the consultants was in the range of \$0.86 million, roughly Rs. 4.1 million.<sup>128</sup> Thus, America was directing the development of the Indian mining sector

and in addition getting access to information about the extent of Indian natural resources and mines.

## **The Indian socialists and America**

Edward Bellamy, the father of American Fabianism, wrote *Looking Backward* in 1888. The book 'was noted for its novelty and for the fact that it was a socialist romance which never once mentioned Socialism'.<sup>129</sup> Fabian Socialism was established 'in the United States with the founding of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society [ISS], in 1905'. ISS was rechristened as the League for Industrial Democracy (LID) in 1921 and established affiliations with the London Fabian Society.<sup>130</sup>

Stuart Chase, an American Fabian, authored a book 'The New Deal' in 1932 which laid the basic framework for FDR's policy. David Lloyd George, the famous British Fabian, also wrote a book on the New Deal. Much like Edward Bellamy, President FDR refrained from identifying his New Deal program as 'socialist'. Similarly, in India's doctrine of 'socialistic pattern of society', Nehru added an "ic" to "socialist" to announce the independence of Indian socialism 'from doctrinaire thinking'.<sup>131</sup> It is argued that 'deception of never calling socialism by its right name was an integral part of Fabian political ideology'.<sup>132</sup> However, the question is whether deception was used to first reform and eventually neutralize capitalism or an instrument to save capitalism. In hindsight, one can say that the Fabians helped capitalism in containing communism. Some Fabians may have supported Trotsky against Stalin but almost all saw class conflict as a problem.

The emergence of the socialist stream in Indian politics coincided with the divorce of Western socialists from Soviet communism after the purge of Trotskyites from the Soviet communist party in late 1927. The socialist revolutionary stalwarts of India, Jayaprakash Narayan, Narendra Deva, Asoka Mehta, Yusuf Meherally, S.M. Joshi, M.R. Masani, N.G. Gore, M.L. Dantwala and a few others formed the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) in 1934. Nehru did not join the group but gave his full support to it.<sup>133</sup> In 1934, the Communist International (Comintern) was critical of CSP and commented that its programme was 'a cunning forgery, a desire to

counterfeit revolutionary sentiments'.<sup>134</sup> By 1935, the Comintern changed its policy and encouraged the British Communist leaders to help the Communist Party of India (CPI) unite with CSP.<sup>135</sup> The Soviet position had changed because of the change in the international situation. By the end of 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt agreed to recognize the Soviet Union, and the relationship between the two improved considerably.

However, despite the two coming closer, CSP criticized CPI's connections with Communist International and their lack of understanding of the caste dynamics in India. CSP claimed that it was more nationalist than the CPI because it did not take money or policy inputs from the Soviet-led Communist International. However, the fact is that the CSP was as intricately linked to the American international strategy as were the communists to the Soviet geopolitical interests. This became evident in the mid-1950s when the Indian socialists were in the vanguard supporting the CIA-aided rebellion in Tibet.

### *The libertarian returns from Brussels*

Nehru's trip to Europe for the Brussels Congress and the League against Imperialism (BCLI)<sup>136</sup> in the late 1920s was a defining moment in India's socialist history. At the BCLI, Nehru learned about the limitations on sovereignty as well as the power of international finance capital. His note of 13 September 1927, titled "A Foreign Policy for India", brought out the complexities of a deeply interconnected world and observed that even a country like France, 'the most intensely national of countries', could not have ministers who challenged the 'plans of high finance of New York'. He cited the example of M. Caillaux, the French finance minister who was forced to resign twice, in 1925 and 1926, due to direct intervention by Wall Street. He further observed:

We talk of labour and socialist internationals but the greatest and the most powerful international organisations today are those of capital and finance which control the governments of even so called democratic countries and bring about war and peace. The American marines take possession of Nicaragua because Messer. Brown Brothers of New York have money invested there. Cuba is not fit for

independence, says President Coolidge, but the entire world knows that her unfitness is due to the presence of rubber which American capitalist covets. China cannot be free because too much British and Japanese capital is locked up there. India cannot keep apart from this tangled web, and her refusing to take heed of it may indeed be disaster.<sup>137</sup>

In the early 1920s in his review of Bertrand Russell's *Road to Freedom*, Nehru expressed his allegiance to democracy, which he felt was 'manipulated by the unholy alliance of capital, property, militarism, an over-grown bureaucracy, and assisted by capitalist press'.<sup>138</sup>

Nehru's association with British Fabians steered him away from communism. Nehru went on a three-day guided tour of the Soviet Union along with other group members of the Brussels Conference. He was impressed but not overwhelmed by what he saw in Moscow, and he did not advocate setting up a replica of the Soviet Union in India.

According to Frankel, Nehru's attraction to socialism in the 1930s was not based on

the academic Fabianism fashionable in Edwardian England, but the practical example of socialism in the Soviet Union (before the onset of Stalinism) to which he was directly exposed in contact with Orthodox Marxists in 1927 at the Brussels Conference of the oppressed Nationalities and during a brief four-day visits to Moscow in the same year.<sup>139</sup>

What Frankel fails to probe is the names of the orthodox Marxists and their political motivations. The result of such omissions is that much of popular history has come to associate Nehru's socialism with either Marxism or British Fabianism and completely ignores the impact of the New Deal and the American Civil Liberties Union on Nehru. In his two-year stay in Europe, Nehru met American liberal democrats who were opposed to imperialism, including the American imperialism in Latin America.

At the Brussels 'Congress of the oppressed', Nehru came in contact with Roger Baldwin, director of the ACLU.<sup>140</sup> Nehru and Baldwin liked the idea of socialism but were opposed to its attachment to the 'machinery of a

police state'.<sup>141</sup> Both were elected to the executive committee of the 'League against Imperialism' but were eventually expelled after being identified as 'non-communists'. The communists at Brussels described Nehru as 'the lame bourgeois representative of the Indian National Congress'.<sup>142</sup>

On 25 November 1929, Nehru wrote to Baldwin that he agreed with him and Edo Fimmen that non-communists could only continue in the League against Imperialism 'provided they are given proper place in it. They cannot continue in it if the League becomes a purely communist organization'.<sup>143</sup>

Baldwin introduced Nehru to the American version of socialism that hinged on FDR's state-led interventions to tackle the damage caused by the Great Depression.<sup>144</sup> This is not to suggest that Baldwin was the only influence that shaped Nehru's socialist and liberal outlook.<sup>145</sup> In 1928, Baldwin asked Nehru to send him the details about the political prisoners in India. Nehru requested Subhas Chandra Bose to furnish the details and informed him that Baldwin was an important man and 'he may be able to help us with money. His organization is a powerful one and we should try to supply him all the details he requires'.<sup>146</sup> Baldwin requested Nehru to help M.N. Roy, an estranged Trotskyite, arrested in Bombay on 21 July 1931 for his alleged involvement in the Kanpur and Meerut conspiracy cases. In return, Nehru requested Baldwin to help by drawing public attention to the case and by sending some money.<sup>147</sup>

Baldwin disagreed with the communist assessment of India's independence 'as a sell-out of the Indian bourgeoisie to the British to save their own properties'.<sup>148</sup> He advised Nehru to prepare India for a 'social revolution'.<sup>149</sup> In a letter written on 29 April 1931 from New York, Baldwin urged Nehru to persuade Gandhi not to compromise his stand in negotiations with the British.<sup>150</sup>

Nehru's interactions with Baldwin introduced him to the nuances of merging class inequalities 'with demands for an end to discrimination'.<sup>151</sup> Nehru-Baldwin interactions are also important because they played a crucial role in influencing Nehru in matters of foreign policy. Many of Baldwin's criticism of US foreign policy reflected in Nehru's writings and statements.<sup>152</sup> Baldwin's anti-Stalinism made an impact on Nehru. On 4 September 1933, writing in *The Hindu*, he quoted Trotsky and said, 'If one

is afraid of strife, disorder and revolution, one has chosen the wrong moment to be born'.<sup>153</sup> This was the time when Nehru's 'leftism' became 'less and less vague and wooly'.<sup>154</sup> In 1933, in his presidential address to the Lucknow Congress, Nehru explained that socialism meant 'the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and a replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative system'.<sup>155</sup> However, Nehru's radicalism, disentangled from Marxist revolutionary principle of the 'class struggle', fizzled out by 1935. As Sudipta Kaviraj avers, 'his radicalism was moderated and his ideas resembled more of bourgeois socialism as described in a section in *Communist manifesto*'.<sup>156</sup> This was also the time, according to John Higham, when radicalism among American intellectuals – belonging to the 'deviant community-in-the-making' – receded.<sup>157</sup>

After his brief affair with radicalism, Nehru drifted towards civil liberties movements. He drew inspiration from Baldwin's work at the ACLU and his book *Civil Liberties in Russia*.<sup>158</sup> Nehru started a similar organization in India on 8 October 1935.<sup>159</sup> He proposed that the Indian Union develop close contacts with all civil liberties unions abroad except Britain. However, in 1936, he informed Krishna Menon that the Indian Civil Liberties Union could not be affiliated to the British National Union because the latter was closely associated with the English state, which refused to even affiliate a similar union in the Irish Free State.<sup>160</sup> Nehru attached great importance to the Civil Liberties Union and distanced himself from 'promoting class hatred and class war'.<sup>161</sup> To add to its prestige, he got Rabindranath Tagore as its honorary president and Sarojini Naidu as the head of the All India Council consisting of 130 members. Nehru also made vain attempts to persuade Krishna Menon to come back to India for six months to be the secretary of the Union.<sup>162</sup>

S. Gopal, while writing on the 'formative ideology of Jawaharlal Nehru', doesn't go beyond Marx and Mahatma. He acknowledges Nehru's love for modernization and civil liberties, but he fails to trace his association with the idea of the New Deal.

There is consensus among nationalist historians Chandra, Mukherjee and Gopal that both Nehru and the capitalists collaborated in the 1930s and 40s to achieve the common aim of fighting colonialism and establishing a



national government. Nehru could co-exist with conservatives like Gandhi, Patel and Birla in the Congress because their class interests were identical. As Gopal posits,

Nehru saw himself as the quintessential upper-class figure, and even his radical ideas seemed at times to him no more than the product of his deep-seated class sense, a condescending posture. If his hopes for not only the political but the economic future of India were to be carried forward, he could not afford to break with Gandhi.<sup>163</sup>

According to Gopal, Nehru preferred communism to fascism because ‘there was no middle road’.<sup>164</sup> However, the fact is that the middle path was available in the form of the New Deal, and Nehru’s choice was unhesitating. In the 1920s, Nehru predicted that ‘Britain, in order to save itself from extinction, would become a satellite of the United States’.<sup>165</sup>

Excessive focus on Nehru’s short-lived radicalism or attachment to Marxism overshadows his primary allegiance to the capitalist class and his understanding of the material power of America. It also obscures the connections he had forged at Brussels with the American Left. Chandra, Mukherjee and Gopal have grappled with the question as to why the capitalist who differed with Nehru accepted him as the leader of the Congress party inundated with right-wingers.<sup>166</sup>

According to a 1940 government intelligence report, the leftists constituted only 26.6 per cent of the Congress members and 73.4 per cent on the Congress party rolls were right-wingers.<sup>167</sup> The departure of the communists from the Congress party in 1940 further reduced the leftist presence. The minority leftists within the Congress appeared to be spearheading the Congress because in the 1940s and 50s, the conservative leadership had no option but to project its progressive face.

Chandra and Mukherjee have given credit to the brilliance of the local capitalist class in understanding the changing political dynamics in the post-depression era and ensuring Nehru’s rise within the INC. They do not account for the ideological influences from America while explaining Nehru’s political outlook and choices.

During the capitalist crisis of the 1930s, the right-wingers within the Congress – Birla, Patel and Gandhi – moderated the entry of left-liberals

within the party and allowed the members of CSP to be members of the INC as well. They understood that a purely capitalist formation carried no moral credibility to take on communist logic during the Great Depression. They also 'nursed' Nehru and prevented him from evolving a left political alternative to Gandhian leadership or, in Higham's words, prevented him from veering towards joining the 'deviant-community-in-the-making'.

A socialistic Nehru was acceptable to right-wingers within the Congress for two reasons. First, there was broad consensus in the capitalist world that without the help of the state, capitalism was doomed. The Indian capitalists were aware of these developments, especially of what was happening in the United States. As early as 1931, Mahatma Gandhi was the 'man of the year' of *Time*. Secondly, post Brussels, Nehru was aligned to the international anti-Stalinist camp. If New Dealers were acceptable to the American bourgeoisie after the Great Depression, then there was no reason for Indian capitalists to reject Nehru, who by 1935 was talking of organizing the civil liberties movement in India rather than class struggle. Had Nehru shown any inclination to join the Soviet camp, the Gandhi-Birla-Patel trio would have dumped him just as Subhas Chandra Bose was purged.

Subhas Chandra Bose, a serious contender for Congress leadership, did not subscribe to the ideologies of the Anglo-American camp. He was inclined to seek German help, a big factor that drew him away from the power centre within the Congress. On 31 March 1939, a 'little domestic group' consisting of Gandhi, Patel, Kallenbach, Amrit Kaur and Birla met at Birla House in Delhi to purge Bose.<sup>168</sup> On 2 April 1939, Birla informed Amrit Kaur about the final decision on Bose. He wrote,

Subhas has written another letter and I think this will be the last one. It is a very bad letter. The spirit, of course, is the same as you saw in his previous statements. I think he means all these epistles for the press. In a way Bapu is pleased because he can now clearly see what he has to do. It looks as if Subhas does not want to meet Bapu. I think that too in a way is good. Bapu has been talking of purging the Congress of impurities and now he gets the opportunity to do so or retire from the Congress altogether. I said to him that the Congress would be wherever he is and this I think is verily true.<sup>169</sup>

### *J.P. Narayan, the most trusted ally of America*

Jawaharlal Nehru was not the only left-liberal stalwart influenced by the American Left. Jayaprakash Narayan (JPN), the other leading light of the so-called Left in India, was also exposed to American communists and social democrats in the mid-1920s. JPN was a step ahead of Nehru and had even deeper links with the American communists. He had studied in the USA for seven years and was trained in Marxism by Jay Lovestone and Abram Landy.<sup>170</sup> Much like Nehru, JPN was also tied to the Gandhi-Birla-Patel fold. On his return from the USA, JPN joined as private secretary to G.D. Birla, on Mahatma Gandhi's recommendation.<sup>171</sup> His next assignment was as in-charge of Labour Research Department of the Congress party and by 1932 he was the acting general secretary of the Congress party.<sup>172</sup>

JPN's mentor Lovestone was a prominent American communist; in the 1920s he frequented the Soviet Union. When the international communist movement bifurcated, in late 1920s, between the Stalinists and Trotskyites, Lovestone aligned with latter. By the 1940s, Lovestone was a CIA agent who managed labour movements across the globe as a part of the US strategy of containment of communism. He established the office of the International Free Trade Union Committee (IFTUC) in India and Japan.<sup>173</sup> He considered that a strong labour movement in India was quintessential to sustained American presence in Asia.<sup>174</sup> Bharat Mazdoor Sangh, led by Indian socialists, was affiliated with the IFTUC.

The American presence in the Indian trade union movement was considered essential to prevent monopolization of Indian organized labour by Soviet-inspired unions. As per Lovestone's private papers quoted in his biography, Mohan Das, the leader of the Bombay Transport Union, was one of their agents in India. As early as 1952, Indian leftists had labelled Mohan Das 'an American-Vatican-axis agent'.<sup>175</sup> His job was to report the activities of the CPI and the labour situation in the country to Washington. In addition, Mohan Das was also involved in countering the 'Nehru fostered spirit of neutrality in India'.<sup>176</sup>

Post war, the labour attaché in various US missions played an important role in the overall strategy of communist containment. And much of this was done by labour diplomacy and cultivating labour leadership in target countries. America ensured a continuous supply of ideological material that

‘spread the so-called “productivity gospel”, values of non-political trade unionism, labour-management co-operation and modern working practices’.<sup>177</sup> In India, JPN, Minoo Masani and Asoka Mehta<sup>178</sup> were the key contact personnel for US labour attachés. Henri Sokolove, the US labour attaché to India in 1950, supplied ideological material to JPN.<sup>179</sup> David S. Burgess, labour attaché to India from 1955 to 1960, was also close to JPN.<sup>180</sup> Burgess also mentions how he personally refused to be a part of the CIA operation to topple the first elected communist government in Kerala in 1959. It was during Burgess’s tenure that the US assistant secretary of labor, George C. Lodge, visited India from 24 November to 5 December 1958. In a report to his government, Lodge brought out that the trade unions in India – especially the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) and All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) – were far too dependent on their political parties for funding as well as ideological support. Lodge felt that ‘it was unrealistic to suppose that they could stand alone at this stage or that there would be any drive on the part of their leaders to have them stand alone’.<sup>181</sup> The report by Lodge contained suggestions for merging HMS with INTUC and the revelation about requests by a few Indian leaders and government officials for arranging funds to control the spread of communist trade unions.<sup>182</sup>

The networks developed between the Indian socialists and American anti-communist leftists went on to shape left-liberalism; labour movements and also their bonds with the right-wing politicians.

## **Conclusion**

The Indian elite overcame their misgivings about domination by Western capitalists and embraced the American answer to fascist and communist models of modernization and development.<sup>183</sup> The early 1930s saw the emergence of the Indian ‘New Deal Elite’ that were impressed with the concept of TVA. Their ideological alignment with the American Left of the FDR era defined the contours of India’s socialism and also the strength of bonds between the Indian liberal and conservative combine that took over power from Britain. America was not only a natural ally of the right wing, but it was also the mentor of Indian socialists, whose common enemy was

communism. Nehru was accepted as the leader of the combine because he was a libertarian and had developed the knack of using progressivism to make Marxian socialism look unnecessarily doctrinaire. According to Sudipta Kaviraj, Nehru ‘excelled in political uses of ambiguity – but curiously with uninterrupted luck. Under his leadership the Congress declared a socialistic pattern of society as its objective. But the ingenuity with which it was pursued led to actual increase in inequality’.<sup>184</sup>

The ideological alignment continued to guide socialism, rural development and public administration projects in postcolonial India. The community development and the Peace Corps projects implemented in rural India by the US non-government philanthropic organizations were ‘the paramilitary vanguard of American expansionism’.<sup>185</sup> The Indian elite’s ideological moorings prevented them from seeing the negatives of excessive Americanism in Indian polity.

The ruling classes in India ensured that the variety of socialism that emerged in India was pragmatic and flexible. It lacked ideological conviction and commitment to working classes.<sup>186</sup> According to *Economic Weekly*, the socialism of the Nehru era was a ‘rather weak and hollow reed in which one can blow almost any kind of music’.<sup>187</sup> As E.M.S. Namboodiripad clarified, ‘the dominant section of the Congress leadership consisted of confirmed enemies of socialism and that their acceptance of the socialist pattern, whatever it may mean was simply a political manoeuvre’.<sup>188</sup> As another Marxist historian, Vijay Prashad, says, ‘Socialism’ was ‘a convenient word to be wheeled out when it suited the Nehru regime’.<sup>189</sup>

## Notes

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- 70 Capital, July 4, 1946, NMML microfilm:5
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- 100 F/1591203)/P/1949/Cabinet Secretariat (hereafter CS)/NAI "Correspondence with Manny Strauss". C.D. Deshmukh was introduced to Strauss in New York by Dr Mary Rees, wife of Dr Charles F. Rees, president of the Econometric Institute of New York. Rees was introduced to Deshmukh by Dr Walter Shewhart of Bell Industries. Walter visited India in 1948 on the invitation of Indian Statistical Institute and Indian Standards Institute to advice on initiating quality control work in India. Strauss had earlier been financial adviser to the Macey Stores in New York.
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- 139 Francine R. Frankel. *India’s Political Economy, 1947–1977: The Gradual Revolution*, (Princeton, 1978):13
- 140 Sarvepalli Gopal. “Jawaharlal Nehru: Europe 1926–1927,” *Indian Literature*, vol. 48, January-February, (2004); also see T.A. Keenleyside. “Nationalist Indian Attitudes Towards Asia: A Troublesome Legacy for Post-Independence Indian Foreign Policy,” *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 55, Summer, (1982); O.P. Misra. *Economic Thought of Gandhi and Nehru: A Comparative Analysis*, (New Delhi, 1995)
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- 169 Rajkumari Amrit Kaur Papers, Correspondence, NMML. Letter of G.D. Birla to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur
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- 176 Ibid. Lovestone felt that although Mohan Das was an important asset, he was paid 'peanuts' in comparison to other agents.
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- 178 Morris Weisz interviewed by: James Leader, *The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project Labor Series*, May 16, 1993. <https://adst.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Weisz-Morris.ohx-1993.pdf> (Accessed on 14 May 2014). Morris Weisz, was the Counselor for Labor Affairs American embassy in India in 1965–1971 he came to India on recommendations of Ambassador Chester Bowles, and with a letter of introduction to Asoka Mehta. Asoka Mehta, according Morris had spent some time at the University of Hawaii, the East-West Center, where he 'was under the influence of Norman Thomas.'
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## 4 American philanthropy in India

### Bateson's advice

Gregory Bateson, an accomplished anthropologist, was an OSS operative in the China-Burma-India theatre during the Second World War. He was a disinformation specialist who used “black propaganda” techniques against the Japanese. In November 1944, Bateson wrote a position paper on the post-war functions of America in South Asia. He wanted American diplomatic and intelligence policy makers to develop a South Asia outlook that would allow them to ‘rely on effective allies in this area’ after twenty years. Bateson wanted American intelligence to build a strong database on India while the war was still on. He did not recommend the dismantling of the colonial rule in India but suggested that the British overhaul their communication channels with the natives and rely more on delegating authority. He felt that one of the main reasons for British failure in India was the inability of their officials to gather information directly from the native population. According to Bateson, the communication gap widened once the families of British officers started living with them in India. This snapped the officers’ ‘intimate contact with their local mistresses’ and stopped the information flows from the ground. The second reason for the British failure was their attitude of acting like a rigid parent rather than nurturing the natives. Basically, Bateson wanted Britain to switch over from being a formal empire to an ‘informal empire’ that relied more on listening rather than dictating to the natives and letting colonial subjects run the colony on their behalf. The British Empire did not have much time to pay heed to Bateson’s advice. However, Americans did start laying down the

foundation for their exclusive networks in India that would serve them in the coming decades.

Bateson emphasized the importance of information flow and knowledge production in managing an informal empire. These lessons were essential for the ensuing American empire that had the twin tasks of co-opting the Indian elite as well as making them unlearn the British ways they were accustomed to. According to Bhabha, 'the twin forces of economic deprivation and cultural and technological dependence created indigenous national elites of a neo-colonial cast that became willing or unwilling operatives of IMF, the World Bank, and other International cartels'.<sup>1</sup>

America did not have to try too hard to build elite networks in India. Two centuries of British rule in India created a set of elite that knew the English language and were comfortable in the company of Anglo-Saxons. Moreover, according to Partha Chatterjee, the postcolonial political order in India was reorganized without breaking up or transforming 'in any radical way the institutional structure of rational authority set up in the period of colonial rule'.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the threat to American hegemony from the Indian communists was minimal, as quite early into independence, they had given up armed struggle and joined the parliamentary elections process. Therefore, rather than relying on capital or coercion, Americans used 'consent' to establish their hegemony in India. Unlike in Pakistan where the US courted the military, in India the US used its philanthropic organizations to interact with the Indian elite and build an epistemic community that would universalize American interests among the Indian masses. America relied on bottom-up communication management. The Community Development activists, Peace Corps volunteers, dam experts and constitutional experts from America were the 'hegemonic external agencies of modernization and rationalization'<sup>3</sup> that also acted as the eyes and ears of the empire.

Philanthropy played a crucial role as a tool of American foreign policy. The role of philanthropy in creating and sustaining elite global networks is elaborated by Berman in *The Ideology of Philanthropy*.<sup>4</sup> The focus of foundations was universities in 'Third World' countries, creating and financing 'various educational configurations to evolve a stable domestic polity and a world order amenable to their interests and the strengthening of international capitalism'.<sup>5</sup> Moving on from where Berman left, Inderjeet

Parmar draws attention to the role of ‘non-state actors in international relations’ in *Foundations in the Rise of American Power*.<sup>6</sup> Besides looking at foundations as carriers and creators of American foreign policy, Parmar sees them as manufacturers of propaganda and public consent.<sup>7</sup> He brings out the role played by the Ford Foundation in constructing ‘a series of networks based around power knowledge’ to penetrate the University of Indonesia and create ‘cadres of intellectuals opposed to the Indonesian administration. These intellectuals then planned for the eventual demise of Sukarno and the opening up of the Indonesian economy to foreign investments, international loans and friendship with the United States’.<sup>8</sup> ‘By the mid-1950s, for the State Department and for the CIA, American studies was a key strategic cultural overture in the Cold War’.<sup>9</sup>

Takeshi Matsuda in his book *Soft Power and Its Perils* writes about how Rockefeller Foundation–funded Tokyo International House and American Studies Institutes became the tools of the US cultural offensive in Japan. Intellectual and cultural exchange activities indulged in by American soft power created elite networks within Japan that perceived Japanese interests to be coterminous with US goals in the Cold War.<sup>10</sup>

Giles Scott-Smith shows how the Hague Academy of International Law, established in 1923, promoted American foreign policy goals. The Carnegie, Ford and Rockefeller Foundations were involved in the Academy from its inception to modernization. Post war, the Ford Foundation (FF) funded the Academy to ‘build a transnational “epistemic community” among the elites of the newly-decolonizing “Third World” that shared the understanding of international order based on Western notions of development, democracy and the free market’.<sup>11</sup> The basic purpose was to make the third world elite accept the American local as global.

In their quest to forge state-private elite networks to aid US global expansionism, it was imperative for the foundations to discard free market dogmas. For example, the Rockefeller Foundation ran an international Marxism-Leninism project, and its programme on legal and political philosophy ‘offered massive intellectual space to non-conformist émigré scholars and leftist grantees such as Herbert Marcuse’. In 1941, Marcuse worked for the Office of Strategic Service (OSS). Post war, he was shifted to the US State Department and was later ‘embedded in informal transnational networks’.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter gives archival evidence on the deep penetration of the Indian state by American foundations engaged in establishing American hegemony. Barring a few officials, the majority of the Indians welcomed the money and expertise that American philanthropic organizations promised to India. India was important for the American NGOs because of its size, enormity of socioeconomic problems and proximity to China.

## **Early engagement with the Rockefeller Foundation**

At the dawn of the American Century, restrictions imposed by the British Empire prevented the isolationist US state to freely interact with India. However, private capital from America started promoting cultural nationalism<sup>13</sup> and pioneering industrialization in India. In 1893, Swami Vivekananda and Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, stalwarts of Indian spiritualism and industry, respectively, set sail for America in search of mentors. The two first met ‘on board the steamship *Empress of India* from Yokohama to Vancouver’.<sup>14</sup>

The *fin-de-siècle* spiritual guru Swami Vivekananda encountered the Whitney family of America (partners in the Standard Oil Company) to promote and project his ideas of cultural nationalism, which continue to dominate political discourse in India even today.<sup>15</sup> Josephine Macleod, fondly called ‘Yum’ by her friends and Tantine (aunt) by a few disciples of Swami, was the main link between Swami and his sponsors in America and elsewhere in Europe. Macleod belonged to the ‘elite cultured circles’ of London, Paris and New York. She ensured that her sister’s husband Frank Leggett funded Swami and his Ramakrishna Mission.<sup>16</sup> The American support to Swami has had the most profound impact on the evolution of politics and nationalism in India.

Swami Vivekananda made headlines in America after his speech at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago on 11 September 1893.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Tata was eulogized during his 1902 visit to the USA by the American press as ‘the JP Morgan of East Indies’. One American newspaper commented that ‘Li Hung Chang of China, then the richest man



in the world could hardly hope to sit in a poker game with him. Still another called him the partner of Nizam of Hyderabad'.<sup>18</sup>

In America, Tata interacted with George Westinghouse and Mark Hanna. The former 'was indirectly responsible for supplying hydroelectric power through hundreds of miles of Indian foothills to the Bombay presidency'.<sup>19</sup> The latter helped Tata realize his dream of setting up a steel industry in India by 'selling sixty million dollars' worth of American brains and equipment to the Tata family'.<sup>20</sup>

Until about the first decade of the twentieth century, the British bureaucracy was not threatened by American cultural interventions in the subcontinent. The Anglo-American cultural kinship provided protection to the American missionaries operating in India. Just before the first war, the tacit American support to Indian freedom fighters awakened the British and they started taking notice of the missionaries metamorphosing from being messengers of God to being the carriers of the idea of the 'American Century'. The impact of American support against India's impoverishment through 'legalized pillage'<sup>21</sup> made Lord Curzon write in the *North American Review* (1910),

It is notorious that in recent years a propaganda has been initiated in the United States, deliberate in its character, wide in its range and sometimes not too scrupulous in its instruments, for misrepresenting and belittling the work of Great Britain in India.<sup>22</sup>

This was the time when Americanism had begun to impact Indian politics. In 1907, Taraknath Das established the headquarters of his anti-colonial movement in America. The revolutionary *Ghadar* movement originated in the USA.<sup>23</sup> The Indian Home Rule League of America (IHRL) and the Friends of Freedom for India (FFI) was formed in 1917. The first president of IHRL was Lala Lajpat Rai, and J.T. Sunderland was its vice president. The organization's magazine was called *Young India*. Besides others, Jacob Schiff, a Jewish banker in America, funded the organization.<sup>24</sup>

During the interwar years, Americans showed interest in Indian gold and silver reserves. According to G. Balachandran, 'unwittingly, India was drawn into the financial and monetary interplay between the two major powers of the inter-war world economy'.<sup>25</sup> The American involvement in

the Bombay bullion market is narrated by Don Carroll Bliss Jr., who served as assistant trade officer at Bombay from 1924 to 1926. In addition, he also worked as consultant to Maneklal Premchand, senior partner in Premchand, Roychand & Sons. In one of his reports, “The Fundamental Problem of India’s Wasted Resources” published in 1925, Bliss blamed ‘the rudimentary character of the country’s credit system’ that encouraged hoarding of export earnings that were largely in the form of ‘silver ingots, gold ingots, sovereigns or eagles’. According to Bliss, the non-investment of precious metal was the root cause of India’s persistent poverty.<sup>26</sup>

In the 1920s, pirated prints of Hollywood movies appeared in Indian cinema halls.<sup>27</sup> The United States controlled over 90 per cent of the film market in South Asia through the 1920s, 80 per cent in 1930 and 65 per cent by 1934. Despite the increase in popularity of South Asian films in the 1930s, the American presence remained significant. The British industry had scant presence in South Asia by comparison’.<sup>28</sup>

The Whitneys were not alone – Rockefeller had also started taking interest in India. Post–World War I, the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) funded the Vellore medical college; Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow; Madras Women’s Christian College; Christian Woman’s Medical College, Ludhiana; and Kanigiri Boys’ School.<sup>29</sup> In the early 1920s, the Rockefeller International Health Board financed a ‘pilot programme targeted at hookworm, yellow fever and malaria eradication in Madras presidency’.<sup>30</sup> In the early 1930s, Frederick W. Knipe, a malaria-control engineer of the Rockefeller Foundation, launched a malaria-control programme in Pudukkottai in Tamil Nadu.<sup>31</sup> India became a testing ground to prove the efficacy of DDT, which was first used in India during the war. Post war, the US Public Health Service along with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and RF promoted the use of DDT for malaria control. Knipe started the Malaria Institute of India.

Postcolonial India launched the National Malaria Control Program in April 1953, which was largely financed by the United States. Between 1952 and 1958, the US contributed more than 50 per cent of the cost of the programme and nearly 40 per cent of the cost of the eradication programme between 1959 and 1961. In the early 1930s, the Rockefeller Foundation chose Pratapgarh district in Uttar Pradesh to fund their public health

campaign. This campaign was operated through the Indian Red Cross Society.<sup>32</sup>

After independence, the RF contributed to the All India Institute of Hygiene at Calcutta and tied up with the Indian Council of Medical Research to establish a virus research centre at Pune. According to government records, the foundation authorized grants amounting to \$4,600,821 from 1951 to March 1958 for financing different projects in India. The RF and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture decided to set up an institute for post-graduate agricultural training at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in April 1956.

RF funded the India International Centre (IIC), one of the elite institutions in the heart of Delhi – a meeting ground for New Delhi's bureaucrats, businessmen, prominent academia, civil rights activists, media personalities and legal minds in the late 1950s. The International Centre was developed along the lines of the International House at Tokyo built in 1952. On 4 January 1959, C.D. Deshmukh, then chair of the University Grants Commission; Dr S Radhakrishnan, then India's vice president; and Professor Humayun Kabir, a union minister in Nehru's cabinet, mooted the idea of an international centre in New Delhi. RF donated Rs. 2 million for the project. Within a fortnight of the proposal reaching the government, the Rockefeller Foundation granted an initial sum of \$5000 for enabling some of the IIC office bearers to visit Japan to study the working of the Tokyo International House. The presence of Indian elite in the IIC committee<sup>33</sup> and the fact that Prime Minister Nehru saw 'no objection to a grant being received from a foreign foundation' enabled the fast-track clearance.<sup>34</sup>

The RF representatives in India enjoyed easy access to project authorities that were mostly autonomous bodies, like universities, colleges and research institutions. The only direct contact with the government was the agreement between the foundation and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. The department of foreign affairs in the Ministry of Finance was the nodal agency in the Indian government that coordinated all foreign aid coming to India. In fact, when large-scale American aid was first made available, it was decided to appoint the Planning Commission as the central agency to supervise the aid programme. The selection of projects by the foundation followed more or less the same standards as were applicable to programmes financed by government-to-government aid.

In 1958, the MEA discovered that RF was directly contacting and selecting Indian nationals, including government officials, for grants of scholarships. The RF approached the Ministry at the last stage only to get a final stamp of approval, after the selection process was complete, leaving no scope for the government to intervene. The government position was worse because its own officials sought stipend from a foreign private organization. The health minister suggested that the selection be made by a joint committee; the RF representative turned down the proposal with an attitude that suggested 'take it or leave it'.<sup>35</sup> Although the foreign secretary was convinced that India 'must oppose in principle any procedure which enables foreign organizations to approach our people directly and offer them scholarships or grants', he seemed helpless because of the political implications involved in departing from the practice.<sup>36</sup>

The late 1950s was certainly not the time for the government to tighten controls on US philanthropic organizations, because India-America relations were on the upswing. The two countries were cooperating extensively on economic and strategic matters. Commenting on the growing clout of the foundations in India, the director of America Division at the MEA made an interesting comment highlighting the political role of the foundations. The 1 July 1958 noting said,

We have been watching with anxiety the increasing penetration and power of foundations like the Ford, Rockefeller, and Nuffield in governmental spheres, and would welcome the control and regulation of their activities. There was a time when the motive of these great Foundations was purely philanthropic and it was intended to help men and women of outstanding ability who were likely to contribute in various ways to increase knowledge for the benefit of mankind. This impression is still strong but out of date. With the fuller entry of the United States into the international sphere since the world war and its great obsession with communism, there has been added to the original purpose of these Foundations an ulterior motive which is distinctly political. For instance, neither the Ford nor the Rockefeller Foundation would offer a grant to a Chinese or a Russian, howsoever brilliant or deserving he may be. Likewise, in their direct selection of scholars and

grantees in India, the choice of these Foundations is not politically disinterested.<sup>37</sup>

### **The Ford Foundation**

When the Rockefeller Foundation's presence was reduced after 1947, many of its functions were taken over by the Ford Foundation. Incorporated in 1936, the FF acquired international stature after the death of Henry Ford in 1947. The scope of its charter was enlarged to include advancement of 'human welfare', and its role became international.

'In the early days of the Cold War, the [Ford] Foundation's leadership shared the concerns of the United States government regarding communism in Asia and that Indonesia was regarded as contested territory in the confrontation between totalitarian and open societies'.<sup>38</sup> According to Krieg and Rausch, the primary aim of the FF was to moderate modernization and fill up the international order with nationalist regimes more amiable to the American world view. India with its burgeoning population and rising poverty was an effective experimental ground for the foundations to test their social engineering hypotheses. The pace of Mao Zedong's model of development 'turned democratic India into a major crisis region in the view of self-proclaimed development experts of the day'.<sup>39</sup>

India became the FF's first external outlet in February 1952. The FF started its operations from the Ambassador Hotel in New Delhi with Douglas Ensminger as its chief representative who called himself a 'change agent'. Ensminger enjoyed 'unusual access to Prime Minister Nehru'.<sup>40</sup> In the late 1950s, the foundation moved beyond its involvement in Indian villages to partake in India's urban planning. In mid-1957, the FF gave a grant of \$215,500 to the Ministry of Health for the development Delhi's Master Plan. Subsequently, on 30 March 1959, supplementary grants of \$74,200 were disbursed by the foundation. In April 1960, another grant for \$40,000 was obtained by the Ministry of Health (MoH) for the same purpose.<sup>41</sup> The MoH, headed by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, was the nodal agency for the development of Delhi's plan. Kaur was also the minister of Local Self-Government for Delhi. She had personally approached the Ford Foundation to provide expertise for the development of Delhi's master plan.<sup>42</sup> Coincidentally, Kaur headed the India office of the FF.<sup>43</sup> The Indian

political class was oblivious of the conflict of interest involved in the union minister's direct involvement with an American foundation.

The case of development of Calcutta's master plan also reveals the rapport that the foundation enjoyed in Indian political circles. In 1959, at the behest of the MoH, a World Health Organization (WHO) team visited Calcutta. It recommended planning for potable water supply, drainage and sewerage, and planning effort to address the poor state of the city's transportation system, housing, slums and land use.<sup>44</sup>

In December 1960, Ensminger proposed to Dr B.C. Roy, the chief minister of West Bengal, the idea of preparing a master plan for Calcutta along the same lines as the Delhi Plan.<sup>45</sup> The estimated cost of the project was Rs. 2 billion, of which the state government was willing to contribute Rs. 750 million. The state government planned to tap into US Public Law 480 (PL-480)<sup>46</sup> funds controlled by the centre. This matter was discussed in the lower house of the Parliament, where the Indian government expressed its inability to fund the implementation of Greater Calcutta's Master Plan. The Third Plan outlay for West Bengal was fixed at Rs. 2.5 billion, which fully catered to the two pre-approved projects – 'The Ganga Barrage Scheme' and the 'Development of Calcutta Port'. It could not provide an additional one billion in Indian currency for a new project in Calcutta. Money from PL-480 had also been allocated for previously approved projects. However, the Ministry of Finance had no objections to the Ford Foundation financing the study and the preparation of a plan.

Occasionally, the government of India accepted funds from the FF for surveys and investigations at the pre-investment stages of projects that were not strictly in the plan. However, the problem in the case of Calcutta was that Ensminger imposed two conditions before making any commitment with respect to the availability of his experts. He wanted a centralized coordinating authority in Calcutta to undertake the implementation of the master plan, and he wanted the government to give some indication regarding what funds they would provide for the implementation of the plan.<sup>47</sup> The National Development Council directed the government to provide some funds for the improvement of the Greater Calcutta area. Accordingly, Ensminger was assured that some plan projects, like the project for improvement of the Calcutta port, the project for developing Haldia as a subsidiary port and the project for improving the sanitation and

water supply in the Calcutta area, would contribute directly to the improvement of conditions in Greater Calcutta. Ensminger was not satisfied with a verbal assurance; he wanted all these suggestions in black and white. He also stressed that

in the near future, the West Bengal government should be induced to give a definite priority to the project for developing and implementing a master plan for the Greater Calcutta area by downgrading, if necessary some of the projects already in the West Bengal plan.<sup>48</sup>

The chief minister was determined to go ahead with the plan. The state cabinet and the central Planning Commission allocated Rs. 100 million each to kick-start the implementation of the blueprint suggested by the Ford Foundation team. To assist the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMPO) in preparing a comprehensive programme for the development of Greater Calcutta, the Ford Foundation provided regular grants to the government of West Bengal amounting to \$2,802,000 from June 1961 to September 1964. In 1965, it gave another grant to the tune of \$960,000.<sup>49</sup> Apparently, most of this grant went into meeting the cost of the American staff which the Ford Foundation brought, as well as imported equipment of various kinds. For example, the Ford Foundation's initial grant to facilitate the preliminary work for the Calcutta project was \$800,000. The breakup of the utilization of this grant was as follows:

- a \$510,000 – to meet the local expenses of advisers and consultants recruited by Ford Foundation for its India office.
- b \$55,000 – paid to the government of West Bengal for the purchase of equipment and supplies on the basis of list approved in advance.
- c \$235,000 – to be spent through the Institute of Public Administration in New York for preparation of prototype designs and plans with the agreement of the government of West Bengal.<sup>50</sup>

Besides the issue of funding, the other controversial issue was Ford's involvement in the functioning of the CMPO, which was created at its insistence in 1961.<sup>51</sup> However, as the project progressed, the controversy surrounding CMPO and its secretary, Lt Gen D.N. Chakravarti, apparently became a cause of disagreement between the West Bengal government and

the foundation. In the middle of 1962, some media reports suggested that the Ford Foundation was not happy with the performance of Chakravarti and they wanted him replaced by S.K. Dey who was then serving with the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Rome. *Swadhinata*, a left-wing paper, alleged that Dey was 'very intimate with American circles', and his name was suggested by Sudhir Ghosh, [an influential figure in the New Delhi, London and Washington power circles] who had facilitated Dr B.C. Roy's meeting with President Kennedy at the White House.<sup>52</sup> The newspapers reported that initially the chief minister had succumbed to the pressure exerted by the foundation, but later decided to retain Lt Gen Chakravarti and backed him to complete his full three-year term at the CMPO.

Reacting to the bad press that the FF received on the CMPO issue, on 18 June 1962, Ensminger wrote to the chief minister, stating that:

During its ten and half years in India the Foundation has been able to work quietly and without exception, has had the respect of those with whom we have been associated. Never before have we been presented as having questionable motives and being difficult to get along with... . The more I reflect on the way the Foundation continues to be brought into the press, mainly on controversial issues related to the CMPO, the more I wonder why this is so and what should be done about it. I cannot help but raise with you the question as to what your own wishes are about the Foundation continuing to try to assist CMPO.<sup>53</sup>

Promotion of development economics that prioritized capitalist growth over social development was at the heart of the plan proposed by the FF for Calcutta. The underlying philosophy behind the plan was that desirable social goals could only be built on a strong economic base. Investments in building industrial and transport infrastructure was more important than spending on social sector.<sup>54</sup>

## [Penetrating Indian education](#)



Besides missionaries, one of the first vehicles to carry the idea of the 'American Century' far and wide was a think tank named the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR). It was a pioneer in the field of international affairs research and represented growing American interest in Asian and Pacific affairs in the 1920s. The think tank was supported by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial, which gave grants of \$25,000 and \$15,000, respectively.<sup>55</sup> In its more than three decades of existence, the IPR held conferences dedicated to India. In 1949, IPR held a conference on 'Indian-American Relations' in collaboration with the Indian Council of World Affairs. The conference was held at Delhi University and was inaugurated by Syama Prasad Mookerjee, the right-wing leader.<sup>56</sup> At the Lucknow conference held in 1950, Nehru delivered the inaugural address.<sup>57</sup> In 1951, IPR published a booklet titled *Militant Hinduism in Indian Politics: A Study of the RSS* by J.A. Curran Jr.<sup>58</sup>

The Watumull Foundation, a US-based organization, had begun work on Indo-US cultural and educational ties before independence. It was established in 1942 by Gobindram J. Watumull, a wealthy Sindhi merchant who was married to an American.<sup>59</sup> He ran a store in Honolulu and lobbied for recognition of Indian citizenship rights in USA. The British intelligence report commented that his 'excursions into political fields' were swift and identified him as 'one of the big noises of the Indian National Congress Association of America, California, whose apparent object was to mobilize Indians on the West Coast much in the same way as the ILA had done on the East Coast'.<sup>60</sup> The foundation had two offices, one at Los Angeles and the other at Honolulu. The objective of the foundation was to offer scholarships to bright young Indians for higher studies in America and thereafter return to India to do constructive work.<sup>61</sup>

The foundation's budget for scholarships for 1944–45 was \$25,000, and it envisaged disbursing \$50,000 and \$75,000 in the succeeding two years.<sup>62</sup> Watumull's wife was the chair of the scholarship disbursement committee. S. Radhakrishnan was a member of the India advisory board of the foundation and Watumull's brother in Hyderabad was its chair. Adolf Berle Jr. was also associated with the foundation. The American advisory board consisted of President Gregg Sinclair of the University of Hawaii; Dr Carl Taylor Compton, president of MIT; Tarak Nath Das; Gobind Bihari Lal; S.

Chandrasekhar of the University of Chicago; Merle Curti of Wisconsin University and Harry Carman of Columbia University.

In 1946, Merle Curti's lecture tour of India was sponsored by Watumull. Curti lectured at 'twenty-one Indian universities and a number of institutes, high schools, colleges, and cultural centres'.<sup>63</sup> The topics included 'the American revolution and its democracy, nationalism, civil war, industrialism and the growth of religious freedom, and American democracy'.<sup>64</sup> John Haynes Holmes, a Gandhian scholar, was sponsored by Watumull to tour India in 1947. In 1955, the Rockefeller Foundation funded Curti's return to India as visiting professor at Delhi University.<sup>65</sup>

The US government's direct involvement in Indian education and intellectuals commenced during the war. In order to circumvent the British restrictions on exchange of students as well as professors between India and America, George Merrell, the US officer-in-charge at New Delhi, recommended to his government that the best opportunity to 'introduce American influence into Indian education was by engaging with the private institutions'. On 28 April 1944, Dr Jagadish Mohandas Kumarappa, the head of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), became the first Indian state guest to the United States. He was flown to the United States in an ATC (air transport command) plane. In America, Kumarappa was to pick up American teachers who could be given grants by 'the US education department to teach at the Tata Institute'.<sup>66</sup>

The Fulbright Program was established in 1946 to advance the global centrality of the United States.<sup>67</sup> The US and India signed an agreement on educational exchange in 1950, which established the US Educational Foundation in India (USEFI). The USEFI implemented Fulbright Programs to fund the education of Indian and American scholars in institutes of higher learning. The programmes were financed from the money earned through the Lend-Lease sales.<sup>68</sup> The US embassy wanted the capital fund to be spent within twenty years, because the goal was 'immediate improvement of international understanding', to contain 'the rise of extreme nationalism'.<sup>69</sup> The twenty-year plan included setting up a 'battery of lecturers abroad, rather than one or two annually until the end of the time'.<sup>70</sup> The USEFI had eight directors of which four were from the USA and rest were Indian nationals, and its chair was the US 'chief of mission' in India.<sup>71</sup> The US sought income tax exemptions for scholars and furniture

coming to India under the foundation head. The Indian government did not provide income tax exemption but found a way out by giving a grant equivalent to the amount recoverable as income tax.<sup>72</sup> Dr Olive I. Reddick, director of the USEFI in the 1960s, was very close to Nehru and, according to Boewe, 'he [Nehru] did respect her, and even as Prime Minister he would come to Fulbright House at her bidding'.<sup>73</sup> Olive was an old missionary who worked for OSS. After the war, she was back in India courtesy of the 'swords-to-plowshares Fulbright Program which was designed to convert into educational benefits the value of war materiel no longer needed'.<sup>74</sup> USEFI was an adjunct of the US Information and Education Service (USIE) that became the nodal agency for implementing the US cultural foreign policy in 1948.<sup>75</sup>

Targeting intellectuals in India was high on the American agenda. Chester Bowles felt that it was 'terribly essential to hit' the 'intellectuals, a frustrated middle-class group'. In June 1952, Bowles informed his authorities that he was launching a "big program" to work on intellectuals in India'.<sup>76</sup>

The PL-480 fund generated by America for use in India through wheat exports was also used to build educational contacts. In April 1960, a sum of Rs. 29 million was approved for the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). The Rudrapur Agricultural University in the state of Uttar Pradesh also received grants under the scheme. Another project selected for grant under PL-480 was the establishment of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur, for which the approval was given in the beginning of 1960. A consortium of nine American universities got together to fund computer education at IIT (Kanpur) for the purpose of building a cadre of 'American-oriented Indian technical elite which played a central role in the establishment of computing education in India, and in the development of the Indian IT industry'.<sup>77</sup> The other outcome of the American interest in the IIT was that they took the best brains from India to stamp American hegemony in the internet-driven world.

Similarly, the American impact on Indian social work education was profound. According to Kalyan Sankar Mandal, the influence 'came most systematically through the US government's Technical Co-operation Mission (TCM) and the Council of Social Work Education Exchange Programme that sent American consultants for faculty development

programmes in the Indian schools of social work. In exchange, Indian faculty members went to the schools of social work in the US'.<sup>78</sup>

The nodal agency for the Indo-American cooperation in social work education was the TISS set up in 1936 as Sir Dorabji Tata Graduate School of Social Work by an American missionary, Clifford Manshardt.<sup>79</sup> During 1946–47, an American expert from the University of Louisville, Kentucky, started a specialized course in medical and psychiatric social work at TISS.<sup>80</sup> In 1948, she was replaced by an Indian trained in Chicago. Similarly, the family and child welfare specialization at the TISS was established by an American expert from the Merrill-Palmer Foundation, later handed over to an American-trained Indian alumnus of TISS. Mandal posits that this

resulted in the correspondence of social work curriculum at the Tata Institute with American social work education. What is more important, the Tata Institute being the forerunner of social work education in India was closely followed by other schools of social work in designing their curriculum. Thus, the American influence on social work education in India became widespread.<sup>81</sup>

Highlighting the adverse impact of American influence, Mandal posits that the 'dominance of American publications' burdened the students to somehow fit the 'concept, theory or technique based upon American cultural ideologies into the practice of social work in Indian welfare settings'.<sup>82</sup>

### ***The American Institute of Indian Studies***

Four American professors from the University of Wisconsin toured India from 20 December 1960 to 28 January 1961. They were sponsored by the US State Department to submit the plan for setting up the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) to the Indian authorities. The purpose of AIIS was to establish an 'outpost' of Philadelphia University in a suitable place in India, where American scholars received fellowships by the Ford Foundation to pursue various courses of studies and research on South Asia. The Americans scholars were to get Philadelphia University credits for

work in India. The funding for the project came from the Ford Foundation that provided one million dollars, to be spent in ten years, to Philadelphia University. In addition, the office of education in the USA promised \$72,000 a year for two years. The US Congress authorized the use of PL-480 funds for such education activity.<sup>83</sup>

In February 1961, S. Dutt, foreign secretary told Kirpal Singh, education secretary, that 'politically it would be undesirable to allow the US government to start an institute of their own in India'. Dutt's concern was that the proposal had the potential to invite criticism in Parliament and embarrass both the Indian and US governments. He suggested that as per past practice, American specialists be attached to selected universities in India where the facilities could be expanded with US aid. The Indian concerns were conveyed to Dr Reid, cultural attaché at the US embassy in India.<sup>84</sup>

In September 1961, notwithstanding the Indian government's reservations, Reid informed Kirpal Singh that the American Institute would function through headquarters located in Deccan College, Pune and other locations. Singh was surprised to know of these developments.<sup>85</sup> Initially, the institute was to operate from a rented accommodation within the new building of Deccan College. In reply to Singh's queries, Reid stated that a preliminary outline of the proposal was submitted to the State Department on 31 January 1961. The representatives of the two American universities discussed the plans with the vice chancellors of several Indian universities; officials of the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Science Research & Cultural Association (SR & CA) and the University Grants Commission.

The foreign secretary immediately asked Joint Secretary (West) in MEA to contact Reid and request him not to go ahead with the scheme without clearance from the concerned ministries. In reply, Reid sent the details of the proposed institute and said that Professor Norman Brown would be arriving in India on 1 January 1962 for further discussion on the modalities for setting up the proposed institute. The foreign secretary in his 8 January 1962 meeting with Brown, Reid and EL Timmons, US chargé d'affaires, informed them that politically it was not feasible to set up the AIIS in India. He showed them the way, however, by suggesting that they could instead set up an office at the Institute, which had already been incorporated at Philadelphia University. He further added that 'the offices of the Institute will function in the same manner in which the offices of Ford and

Rockefeller Foundation operate in India' and could be treated as a charitable body that is exempt from paying income tax. Dutt further suggested that the AIIS's India office could negotiate with the appropriate Indian universities for the promotion of programmes of research and studies.<sup>86</sup>

The foreign secretary refrained from giving full clearance to the AIIS because of political compulsions. He was worried that the communists would cause uproar in the Parliament on the issue of US penetration of Indian higher education. Not just the communists, but Dutt also had to contend with the dissent in his own office. S. Gupta, an MEA official, expressed his reservations regarding the AIIS project, on 1 January 1962, when he wrote:

The Institute may be utilised to enable officials of American security and defence agencies to collect on the spot information about India and to establish contacts with selected Indians. Finally, it may be utilised as the nucleus for a programme of organised infiltration into Indian educational institutions by qualified and selected Americans for purposes such as those fulfilled by the *Arabic Centre run by the British at Beirut*.

(emphasis added)

Gupta referred to the Middle East Centre for Arab Studies run by the British in Lebanon for its reputation as the British Spy School, where diplomats, spies and businessmen mingled together.<sup>87</sup> So concerned was the diplomat about these developments that he requested the foreign secretary to acquaint the prime minister with the issue.<sup>88</sup> However, MEA reservations and Gupta's dissent were disregarded and AIIS was inaugurated on 7 February 1964 at Pune by Vijayalakshmi Pandit in the presence of the US ambassador to India, Chester Bowles. Initial plans were to have President Dr S. Radhakrishnan at the inauguration ceremony. However, it was cancelled at the last moment as it was considered inappropriate for the president to inaugurate a small foreign institute.

However, before the formal inauguration, scholars from the USA had already come to India. In the first list of names submitted to the Indian government for approval, four scholars were rejected by the MEA because

of the nature and scope of their proposed study in India. However, all four managed to reach India because the embassy in USA granted them visas without consulting the MEA in New Delhi. Out of these four, Margret Fisher, political science lecturer at the University of California, and Leo E. Rose of the Institute of International Studies, University of California, not only reached India but also toured Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. The MEA came to know of their presence only when the two scholars sought permission to visit The North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA). Fisher and Rose's subject was the impact of Sino-Indian conflict on India's relations with neighbouring states.

The intelligence report on Rose suggested that he was the head of a project on the Himalayas at the University of California, Berkeley, and a scholar in Chinese. He visited Sikkim in 1961, where he had delivered a talk on the subject 'Awakening of American interest in affairs of Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan etc.'. It was also reported that Rose was deputed by the University of California, Berkeley, to carry out historical research in the Himalayan states for the US government.<sup>89</sup> These activities picked up momentum a couple of years before and in the aftermath of the Sino-Indian war of 1962. The other two scholars whose visa and study proposals were rejected but still managed to come to India were David Bayley and Victor Barnouw.<sup>90</sup>

Another famous name in South Asian affairs was Stephen Cohen, who came to India in 1963 as a fellow of the AIIS. His subject was 'role of the military in early and middle stages of political development in Indian subcontinent in 1920'. In June 1964, Cohen again applied for an extension of his stay in India and proposed to study, 'The military and Indian constitutional order'. Initially, this topic was rejected. However, later the Indian government approved Cohen's study.<sup>91</sup> Over the years, both Rose and Cohen have emerged as authorities on Himalayan and South Asian affairs. Both were unofficial South Asian resource persons for the US government. Rose helped make the South Asia centre at Berkeley an important think tank. Their work has tremendously influenced local scholars and area studies departments in Indian universities.

AIIS was an integral part of American public diplomacy, to communicate specific strategic narratives about America to Indian intelligentsia and in so doing, increase America's soft power. The initiative was sponsored by the American state and shaped 'by specific epistemologies, which in turn

represent particular political interests'. The establishment of AIIS followed almost the same four-stage format as explained by Parmar:

First, strengthen or develop a U.S. based area studies capacity in the region of interest by investing large resources at elite American universities; second and almost in tandem, develop relevant institutions in the 'target' nation or region; third, bring the two parts of the emerging networks together; and fourth and overall, ensure that the entire program to conform with the broad objectives of the American state.<sup>92</sup>

### *The Asia Foundation*

In the mid-1950s, the Asia Foundation, another American NGO, entered the Indian education sector. The San Francisco-based foundation started operations as 'Committee of Free Asia' in 1951. According to a report filed by the India Consul General in San Francisco, one of the objects of the Committee of Free Asia was

[t]o convince the people of Asia that Western dominance was better than Russian communist domination. Many ex-employees of the state department were directing the activities of the committee and apparently its funds also came from the state department.<sup>93</sup>

Nehru was of the view that the 'Committee for Free Asia is an objectionable organization and we should not encourage it in any way in India. We should be wary of its activities here. Any person wishing to come to India on its behalf should not be encouraged'.<sup>94</sup>

Officially, the Committee for Free Asia was barred from setting up office in India because it was considered close to the CIA. In 1952, India refused to give a visa to Mr Richard, an official of the committee on the grounds that his objective in India was to carry on propaganda activities. Commenting on the issue, the prime minister noted that this had nothing to do with any particular policy, communist or non-communist. Nehru clarified, 'If once we admitted the right of a non-official organization to



indulge in particular type of political propaganda in India, we will have to give facilities to rival organizations and India would become a battleground of propaganda from all sides'.<sup>95</sup>

In 1953, the 'Committee for Free Asia' was rechristened as the 'Asia Foundation'. Its articles of association made no direct reference to communism. However, its primary objective remained to conduct of anti-communist propaganda in Asia and to mobilize opinion against China and the USSR.<sup>96</sup> The foundation in its new avatar sought to achieve its purpose by more indirect means. It began building its contacts through cultural and other channels and by making 'private American support available to individuals and groups in Asia who are working for the attainment of peace, independence, personal liberty and social progress'.<sup>97</sup>

G.L. Mehta, India's ambassador to the US, was inclined to welcome the Asia Foundation to India. He was of the opinion that the MEA and Nehru were taking their suspicion of the Asia Foundation too far and were seeing hidden motives in whatever they proposed. He felt that since Paul Hoffman and Chester Bowles, two respectable liberals, had endorsed the foundation, there was no reason for India to suspect its credentials.<sup>98</sup>

On 14 November 1957, the consul general of India, San Francisco, sent to the foreign secretary some old documents of the Asia Foundation obtained from George Noronha by his press attaché S.N. Husain.<sup>99</sup> George Noronha, a naturalized American, was born in Bengal in 1904. He married an American woman during his stay in America from 1927 to 1935. On his return to India in 1935, he served as the news editor at All India Radio for two years and thereafter until 1945 as an important member of the India Trade Union Congress.<sup>100</sup> Post-independence, he served as the director of the Indian Institute of Art and Industry at Calcutta that was set up in 1945 as a central organization for the improvement of national standards of industrial design and commercial art. He returned to America in 1950 and worked as the planning officer for India, Pakistan and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) at the Asia Foundation office in San Francisco. In 1953, he became a consultant to the Asia Foundation and also the editor of their bi-weekly newsletter *The Asian Student*, which was distributed 'to over 25,000 Asian students studying in the US and foreign student advisors to help students stay abreast of developments in their home countries while helping them adjust in the U.S'.<sup>101</sup>

Noronha gave two interesting articles related to the Asia Foundation's views on Nehru and India to S.N. Husain. Both the documents revealed the personal opinions of two important CIA operatives on communist activity in India as well as prevalent opinion in America during the 1950s on Nehru's endorsement of neutralism and socialism. The documents also show the involvement of some right-wing Indian leaders and politicians in the CIA-driven anti-communist network in Asia. One was the 3 September 1952 letter of James L. Stewart entitled "My Current Thinking on Committee of Free Asia Activities in India"<sup>102</sup> and the second was a report by Dr Ferenc Nagy and Mr Michael Hoge titled "Our Tour of India". Nagy and Hoge visited India on an Asia Foundation-sponsored six-week tour to conduct anti-communist propaganda. Nagy was the last non-communist prime minister of Hungary. In 1947, he left his country to be in America, from where he led the Hungarian exile groups. He distanced himself from the 1956 uprising in Hungary to prevent it from being tarnished as American instigated movement.<sup>103</sup>

James L. Stewart's letter of 3 September 1952 began by clarifying his prejudice against Nehru and his government, whom he felt was committing a sin by attacking Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. He opined that 'like many other government leaders past and present, [Nehru] is beginning to confuse the welfare of his country with the well-being of himself'.<sup>104</sup> Stewart also expressed his scepticism and cynicism regarding the success of Ambassador Chester Bowles in India and felt that 'communism and communalism in India' could not be 'defeated by the expedient of sending a couple of American children to Indian schools'.<sup>105</sup> This was a comment against Ambassador Bowles, who had decided to send his daughter to an Indian school.

Stewart wanted his representatives to reach out to Nehru or some other important functionaries in the government preferably designated by Nehru's office. After establishing contact with Nehru and Chester Bowles, Stewart's plan included his representative moving to Bombay to maintain contact with the Democratic Research Service (DRS) and its mentor Minoo Masani, an anti-communist crusader who had visited the Asia Foundation headquarters in 1951. DRS was the brainchild of India's home minister, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. In 1949, Birla, India's foremost industrialist,

funded Patel to start a think tank to monitor communist activity in India. Initially, the DRS was headed by Morarji Desai.

Noronha did not consider Masani to be a power figure in Indian socialist circles. However, Stewart felt that Masani was relevant because he was well connected to the 'Tata combine'. Another point in Masani's favour was that the DRS regularly published anti-communist pamphlets. Stewart wanted to expand Masani's facilities in turning out pro-democratic, anti-communist literature at low cost, in order to meet the twin objectives of influencing the minds of the Indian students either by direct work among them or prior work among their teachers and to counter the flood of cheap communist literature.

Stewart's strategy to fight communism in Asia included tackling the spread of the idea of neutralism within India. He felt that the biggest impediment to the achievement of his task was 'a minority of over-educated, highly articulate intellectuals who espouse the policy of neutralism'. Part of the strategy was to 'shame Indian intellectuals into a realization that the position of which they seem to be so proud is not one of valor or dignity but is born of moral cowardice'.<sup>106</sup>

Ferenc Nagy was in India in November–December 1954 as the representative of the international peasants' movement, of which he was then a vice president. Nagy, along with Hoge, had come to India on an invitation by N.G. Ranga, member of the Indian Parliament and a leader of the Indian Krishiker Lok party. Masani's DRS did media management for them in Bombay.

Their conclusions were that 'the allegations about Nehru being pro-communist or soft towards communism are false. Nehru is Asia's outstanding leader', and he filled 'a necessary and constructive role in world affairs. In an era of extreme tensions between the eastern and western blocs, Nehru was best suited to act as a buffer between the two and help reduce tensions'.<sup>107</sup>

Nagy and Hoge neither located much evidence of anti-Americanism nor did they find communism making much headway in India. They felt that Nehru's statement to the Planning Commission – 'our final aim in India is a socialist state' – should not be given undue importance because the Indian capitalists did not take it seriously. Nagy and Hoge opined that India was safe from socialism because

the influential capitalist wing in the Congress party will successfully prevent the development of socialist economy. Both the Indian government and private industrialist want capital investments in India. The politicians are for it, and only a small group of bureaucrats are opposed to it.<sup>108</sup>

Another document that Noronha passed on to the press officer at the Indian consulate-general was a speech by Ray Johnson of the Asia Foundation on tackling Islam in Pakistan.<sup>109</sup> In the 1950s, the Asia Foundation supported a project called the Council of Mosque. It was an attempt to challenge the monopoly of reactionary forces over activities in and around the mosque. 'The principal emphasis was to restore the mosque as a community centre rather than just a religious hideout for the mullahs', and for weekly congregational prayer.<sup>110</sup> The Asia Foundation created a journal that contained sermons and recitations from the Koran and along with it the interpretations of the Koran and the right answers for present-day living. They also came out with weekly pamphlets along similar lines. Another important aspect of the Asia Foundation programme was to tap the talent coming out of the madrasas.

The Asia Foundation's problem was that many orthodox families in East Pakistan had 'produced some of the most ardent communists'. The foundation did not consider Islam 'an absolute deterrent' against communism since 'Islam was not necessarily anti-communist'. This opened a new area of work for the CIA that endeavoured to 'stimulate philosophers of Islam to write interpretations and raise the questions of communism in Islam, the modern interpretations of Islam, and so forth'.<sup>111</sup> The foundation was also active in Sri Lanka where they supported Buddhist religious programs.<sup>112</sup>

K.C. Sengupta of the Information Service of India at the office of the deputy high commissioner in Dhaka wrote a letter to MEA on 23 June 1959 in which he highlighted the manner in which American organizations, including the United States Information Service (USIS), the Asia Foundation, ICA (International Cooperation Administration) and Franklin publications, were spreading their tentacles over East Pakistan. According to Sengupta's assessment, these organizations subsidized certain agencies like the Pakistan Press Association to propagate anti-communist activities

and anti-India propaganda. Sengupta's letter elaborated instances when the USIS and Asia Foundation were doling out favours to Pakistani youth for anti-Indian activity.<sup>113</sup> Sengupta was particularly perturbed about the Asia Foundation which 'was spending thousands of dollars to preach Americanism in the garb of cultural activities'.<sup>114</sup>

In 1955, the Asia Foundation expressed its desire to open an office in India. The president of the foundation wanted to initiate two specific projects exclusive to India – (a) sponsoring an Indian journalist to study at Harvard University as a Niemen Fellow and (b) to organize in India a seminar on international relations by the Indian alumni of Harvard University. The consul general forwarded these proposals to New Delhi but with a recommendation that such help from the Asia Foundation should be declined because it could become a propaganda tool for the communists to highlight increasing CIA involvement in Indian affairs. The Indian ambassador in Washington, on the other hand, suggested that India should stop suspecting the Asia Foundation. The ambassador also recommended that Robert Blum be allowed to come to India to discuss matters. The prime minister permitted Blum's visit to India.

Subsequently, there was change in the Indian stance. Sharda Prasad, an Indian journalist in his late twenties, was selected to proceed to Harvard as Niemen Fellow. However, he was denied the grant of passport by MEA because of the fellowship's connection with the Asia Foundation. Sharda Prasad's case was supported on the basis that he was a full-fledged Congress worker and there was no danger of his turning into an American agent. The prime minister agreed with this but observed that it should be pointed out to Sharda Prasad that 'we do not favour the activities of the Asia Foundation and that on his return Sharda Prasad should report on the Foundation's activities'.<sup>115</sup> According to Prasad's son, 'His year at Harvard greatly shaped his understanding of international relations and journalism and he put it to use as a widely read columnist and the principal speechwriter and press adviser to three Indian prime ministers'.<sup>116</sup>

In 1956, the Asia Foundation offered a contribution of Rs. 70,000 (\$15,000) towards the centenary celebrations of Calcutta University from 14 January to 24 January 1957. The foundation also offered a grant of \$10,000 to the University of Bombay 'for provision of certain amenities in one of the two club houses which the university was to build during the

course of its centenary'.<sup>117</sup> MEA rejected Calcutta University's proposal to accept donations from the Asia Foundation but granted it in the case of Bombay University. As a follow-up on the Asia Foundation's assistance for the centenary celebrations of the University of Bombay, fifty copies of the volume *A History of the University of Bombay* written by the Rector S.R. Dongerkery were distributed to leading universities and colleges throughout the United States.<sup>118</sup>

Nehru was ambivalent in his approach to the Asia Foundation. In 1955, he was completely opposed to the foundation; however, his stance on it softened later. On the issue of the Asia Foundation providing funds to Indian universities, Nehru noted,

- a For the present, we might advise Indian Universities against accepting any donations or financial assistance from Asia foundation. The university should be told that the advice given to them should be treated as confidential and is not to be disclosed either to Asia Foundation or to any others.
- b No objection needs to be taken by an Indian accepting a scholarship or fellowship awarded to him by a foreign university solely on the ground that such scholarship or fellowship is financed partly or wholly from funds made available by the Asia Foundation.<sup>119</sup>

The Asia Foundation was not allowed to establish an office in India until 1961. In 1959, complaining against the Indian attitude that denied them a permanent presence in India, Robert Blum wrote to Vijayalakshmi Pandit, then India's high commissioner in London, informing her that although N.R. Pillai, secretary general, MEA, was sympathetic of their activities and even encouraged them, he did not feel that the time was ripe for them to have a permanent representative in India. Blum indicated to Pandit that India could probably get annual grants to the tune of \$500,000 if it authorized a resident representative.<sup>120</sup>

The Asia Foundation funded a number of Indians to study, travel and attend conferences abroad. Moreover, aid was given to organizations and institutions in India. For example, in 1957, the All India Writers Conference held in February 1957 at Baroda was funded by the Asia Foundation. The foundation supported social sciences at teaching and research levels, university education, social work, law and journalism.<sup>121</sup>

In 1955, a law commission was set up under the chairmanship of M.C. Setalvad, attorney general of India, to offer suggestions for improving judicial administration and making it more responsive and less expensive, and, 'secondly, to examine the Central Acts and recommend their revision, amendment and co-ordination'.<sup>122</sup> The Asia Foundation along with Stanford University Law School interacted closely with the Law Review Commission in the Ministry of Law. The Asia Foundation consulted a large number of individuals concerning the possibility of developing a law books program in India. A meeting was held with a select group of Indian legal specialists who spent a summer in Stanford University in a comparative law seminar.<sup>123</sup> The Asia Foundation also funded law-related projects in 1957–58.<sup>124</sup> Granville Austin, a renowned American historian, left a lasting impression on India's legal system; he is a much cited and relied upon source in Indian constitutional jurisprudence.

It also consulted academics concerning the ways in which the foundation could assist social sciences research in India.<sup>125</sup> The Asia Foundation gave grants to the director of the Delhi Public Library to attend conferences. Some dance troupes were also given grants to attend the PEN conference in Tokyo.<sup>126</sup>

In 1957, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, an Indian private educational organization supported by the Hindu right wing, signed an agreement with the Asia Foundation to accept a \$6000 grant. This was for research, writing and publication of some original documents relating to the Indian constitution that were in possession of K.M. Munshi. In March 1958, Munshi also got an opportunity to travel to the United States for a short tour of the America Law School and Research Institution at the expense of the Asia Foundation. Munshi was a conservative leader who was close to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel when he was the home minister.<sup>127</sup> In 1959, Munshi along with Minoo Masani formed an right wing, neo-liberal political outfit named Swatantra party.<sup>128</sup>

In 1966, it finally came to the fore through a story in *Ramparts*, an American magazine, that the Asia Foundation along with Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) and the National Students Association were CIA outfits. Some Indian organizations mentioned in *Ramparts* as recipients of CIA funds included:

- a National Council of University Students of India with its affiliate the National Press Council of India
- b Asian Students Press Bureau
- c International Youth Centre, Delhi and World Assembly of Youth
- d Student Information Centre, Delhi University
- e Friends of India Committee Trust
- f Congress for Cultural Freedom
- g International Confederation of Free Trade Unions<sup>129</sup>

Questions on the CIA's work in India were raised in the Parliament by George Fernandes, H.N. Mukerjee, Indrajit Gupta, S.M. Banerjee, A.K. Gopalan and Umanath, on 20 March 1967. M.C. Chagla, former Indian ambassador to the USA and then foreign minister in Indira Gandhi's cabinet, dismissed the opposition allegations as 'wild reports' and 'vague charges'. One government official suggested that the questions in Lok Sabha on the issue could be answered by employing tactics used by Lester Pearson, Canadian prime minister. When faced with similar debates in the Canadian Parliament, Pearson replied, 'Further enquiries were being made into the matter to ascertain whether there was a case for protest to the US government'.<sup>130</sup>

The Indian government felt that the Indian organizations mentioned in the US press were innocent, as they were not aware of the CIA funding. In an article in the *Washington Post*, Galbraith, former US ambassador to India, wrote that during his tenure Indian authorities were well aware of CIA activities in the education and cultural field, but were not disturbed about them – the implication being that these activities were largely ineffectual.<sup>131</sup>

## Two tiny but influential American NGOs

### CARE

'Cooperative for American Remittances to Everywhere' (CARE) was a non-government US organization that operated closely with the Indian establishment in the 1950s and enjoyed the privilege of easy access to the government. CARE was tasked by the US government to deliver gifts and



aid packages sent from the US for various consignees in India. CARE representatives directly interacted with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. There were two agreements under which gifts donated in America were exempt from customs duties, toll and other taxes: (a) a 1950 agreement with CARE concerning their packages and (b) a 1951 agreement between the government of India and the US government regarding several voluntary relief agencies, including CARE. The agreement with CARE was primarily a working arrangement aimed at ensuring that the custom concessions were not being exploited wrongfully. In March 1957, CARE opened a regional office in Bombay and also later in Calcutta.<sup>132</sup>

CARE actively acted as an ‘undisguised propagandist’ of the USIS. It was involved in the distribution of sets of books known as ‘Expendable Libraries’ or American ‘Book Shelves’. According to Roy McCorkel (chief of CARE in India), ‘these books were quite different from text books, reference books, etc. which were being supplied by CARE to Indian educational institutions according to their own selection, through the Education Ministry under supplementary book Agreement of 1950’.<sup>133</sup> However, Leilamani Naidu of the MEA felt that the books were ‘distinctly part of America’s armoury in the Cold War and intended to win adherents to the American bloc’. Naidu was convinced that India had to ‘resist the US Information Agency’s attempt to have such literature surreptitiously introduced and distributed in India by CARE under the cloak of agreement between private and non-political organization and Government of India’.<sup>134</sup> Ambassador Chester Bowles was well aware of this tacit agenda since he often complained that the supply of free books by the Soviet Union and their sale in India by the communists was a mechanism to fill the coffers of the Communist Party of India.<sup>135</sup>

CARE also used the gifts to build American soft power in India. For example, the organization offered a station wagon for the ‘Hospital Welfare Society’, which came under Health Minister Rajkumari Amrit Kaur. The Health Ministry officials approached the MEA to seek exemption of custom duty on imported motor cars, whereas the rules clearly stated that station wagons were not automatically included in the category of hospital equipment that could be brought in duty free.<sup>136</sup>

Another example of CARE operating beyond the scope of its agreement with India is provided by one of its requests to the chief controller of

imports and exports in India for grant of licences for dispatching 200 “cotton packages” to Pakistan, costing Rs. 30 each. The package contained printed poplin, khaki drill, white shirting, cotton suiting, buttons, thread and one cake of soap sunlight. Then on another occasion, CARE asked permission to manufacture 1000 ploughs for distribution within India. Both these requests were in complete contravention of the 1950 and 1951 agreements that neither permitted CARE to operate as an exporting centre from India nor allowed it to perform the role of a manufacturing unit.<sup>137</sup>

This brazen disregard of rules by CARE did not endear them to a few officials in the Indian establishment. On 18 February 1955, the Finance Ministry (Revenue Department) sent a memorandum to the External Affairs Ministry stating that a CARE representative wanted a combined meeting with concerned officials from the MoH, MEA, Finance (RD), Food and Agriculture, and Home Affairs. The memorandum evoked strong reactions. Leilamani Naidu, palpably outraged by its contents, felt that CARE had dared to ask for a ‘Round Table Conference for the purpose of joint discussions and joint decisions with government representatives’. Naidu opined, ‘It is inconceivable that the entire might and majesty of the Indian Government should be summoned to confer with these employees of some obscure voluntary organization in the United States of America with whom we have really nothing to do’.<sup>138</sup>

### *Meals for Millions*

Meals for Millions (MfM), another philanthropic organization, was launched in India in 1955. The MfM, a private foundation, was started by a few rich Americans as a Christian endeavour for charity. They sent multi-purpose food processed from oil seeds, soya beans etc. in order to provide high-quality proteins combined with vitamins of nutritive value. This ‘multi-purpose food’ was distributed free to various countries through affiliated associations. The affiliates included mission bodies, particularly the Seventh Day Adventists Mission in India.<sup>139</sup> Florence Rose, the executive secretary of the foundation, coordinated MfM’s activities in India. She was a former associate of Margaret Sanger in the Rockefeller Foundation–funded ‘Planned Parenthood Movement’. Rose had also assisted Pearl S Buck in the East West Association program to improve

cultural understanding between the Oriental and Occidental countries and people.

In 1954, the MfM had sent 10,000 lbs. of multi-purpose food to All India Sindworks Merchants Association in Bombay on permission granted by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture under the Indo-US agreement of 1951. Dr Hemandas R. Wadhvani, former health minister of Sind and a member of the Indian Medical Council, was instrumental in connecting the Sindworks to MfM.<sup>140</sup> The Indian government paid for the clearance of all such gift parcels from ports in the United States. These parcels were exempted from customs duty, and after their clearance from the port were dispatched free of transport charges to the destinations in India nominated by the recognized receiving agencies.

The MEA was completely unaware of these parcels coming into India and that the MfM Foundation was not entitled to duty free import concessions through official channels.<sup>141</sup> MfM was not authorized to organize a branch office in India, yet it operated with ease in India because it was well aligned with the Indian elite. India's minister for agriculture, Dr P.S. Deshmukh, was MfM's India president. The other prominent Indian office bearers of the association were Lady Rama Rau, wife of the former governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Mary Clubwala Jadhav, secretary of the Guild of Service Madras, Dr B.R. Sengupta, assistant public health director of West Bengal and Dr Radha Karnad, nutritional adviser with the government of India.

Such was the reach of a fledgling US organization that even the governor of West Bengal sought the home minister's permission to serve on the advisory council of the MfM Association of India. To this request, the home minister recommended that 'it would be more befitting the dignity of the high office if the Governor became a patron of the Association rather than an ordinary member of its Advisory Council'. In April 1955, during a conference of the Council of Voluntary Agencies, a special day was devoted to the MfM program which was attended by various government authorities and welfare leaders, including the minister of health, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, as well representatives of UNICEF, WHO, US Technical Cooperation Mission, Ford Foundation, Nat'l Christian Council, Catholic Relief Services, CARE, Indian Red Cross and Ramakrishna Mission.<sup>142</sup>

## Conclusion

The Americans used two channels to understand and interact with postcolonial India. One was the official channel between the two sovereign governments and the other was the NGO route. The NGOs interacted with the government, semi-government and private sector organizations as well as political parties and civil society. American philanthropic organizations supported the US foreign policy agenda of containing China and were equally interested in selling the 'American dream' to Indians and making capitalism palatable for them. The philanthropic foundations invested in university education and the rural sector, both of which were considered important to monitor and mitigate communist ingress among the peasantry perhaps, following Bateson's advice, to maintain a robust communications network to get first-hand information from the natives.

The Nehru era from 1947 to 1964 is considered the best phase in the history of American philanthropic engagement in India. Gordon describes the 1950s and 1960s as the golden age of American involvement in India.<sup>143</sup> The Rockefeller and Ford Foundations were closely involved in India's economic planning, urban and community development programmes as well as the health and education sectors. Through protracted investments in the Indian education sector, the American foundations built an 'epistemic community' among the Indian elites who shared both the American dislike for communism and their zeal to contain it.

The Rockefeller as well as Ford Foundation had 'unbridled freedom of action' in India.<sup>144</sup> The foundations often bypassed the Indian bureaucracy to achieve their purpose, using their network among the Indian political classes. At times, the soft touch applied by the foundations appeared to be a variance with that of their government; however, the two worked to achieve similar foreign policy objectives. If the US foreign policy establishment applied the stick, the foundations were always there with a carrot. Commenting on the FF's programme to train Indian steel engineers in the USA, *The New Republic* wrote, 'as fast as Secretary Dulles burns our bridges abroad, it seems the Ford Foundation rebuilds them'.<sup>145</sup>

American philanthropy as in other parts of the world courted the Indian elite and intelligentsia through an extensive network within the Indian university system. The Indian establishment facilitated these organizations,

enabling them to advance their goals in India while keeping in mind that India's international image required a semblance of neutrality. When it came to dealing with the activities of the American foundations in India, dissenting Indian voices were few and ignored by the larger majority in the government.

## Notes

- 1 "Speaking of Postcoloniality, in the Continuous Present: A Conversation: Homi Bhabha and John Comaroff," in *Relocating Postcolonialism*, Eds., David Theo Goldberg and Ato Quayson, (Oxford, UK, 2002):16
- 2 Partha Chatterjee. *Empire and Nation – Essential Writings 1985–2005*, (Ranikhet, 2010):257
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- 93 F/67(6)/AMS/1958/MEA/NAI. Leilamani Naidu's 3 January 1957 note on the prime minister's views on the subject.
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- 100 He was in the All-India organizing committee and the first vice president of the Bengal branch of the Indian National Trade Union Congress. During this period, he was the general secretary of the Indian Telegraph Association Ltd, Calcutta – a leading union of telegraphers, telephone and radio operators and also of the Federation of Post and Telegraph unions.
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- 102 "James L. Stewart – Longtime Liaison to Asia," *Chronicle*, January 29, 2006. [www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/James-L-Stewart-longtime-liaison-to-Asia-2523343.php](http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/James-L-Stewart-longtime-liaison-to-Asia-2523343.php) (Accessed on 3 September 2013). Stewart was a prominent anti-communist propagandist and a seminal figure in the founding of the San Francisco-based Asia Foundation. He later went on to become an important diplomat guiding Indo-Japanese ties.
- 103 Ferenc Nagy was the elected prime minister of Hungary in 1946. After the communist came to power, he fled to America in 1948. Nagy became involved in anti-communist propaganda on the



- CIA's behalf and was also blamed by the Soviets for causing the Hungarian uprising in 1956.
- 104 F/67(6)/AMS/1958/MEA/NAI
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 Ibid.
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- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Ray Johnson was the foundation's most versatile Asia expert. He served in the Philippines in 1952–1954 and again in 1964–1967, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Afghanistan, Vietnam and Indonesia.
- 110 F/67(6)/AMS/1958/MEA/NAI
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 Ibid. In Sri Lanka, the Asia Foundation gave money to Buddhist monk Ven. Indurawa Pangnatissa Thero to go on a world tour in 1958. He was the Buddhist chaplain of the armed forces and the founder-director of a Buddhist academy, which controlled 326 schools and two training colleges. In addition, he was a patron of the Ceylon Association of Sinhalese merchants. Rev. Narada Maha Thero, the first chief of the London Buddhist Vihara and author of many books, also got grants from the Asia Foundation.
- 113 Ibid.
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- 116 Sharda Prasad had a bright career as a journalist and public relations professional. Besides serving the Indian Express Group as its news editor, he was also the spokesman for Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.
- 117 F/67(6)/AMS/1958/MEA/NAI
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 Ibid. The prime minister's position with regards to the Asia Foundation was clarified by N.K. Pillai in a note of 13 January 1957.
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- 122 K.C. Sen. "Law Commission Report," *Economic Weekly*, July (1959):917
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- 124 F/67(6)/AMS/1958/MEA/NAI.
- 125 Dr Syid Zafar Hasan also got funding from the AF. Dr George Kuriyan of the Department of Geography of the University of Madras and Dr Sujan Bandhaba Chatterjee of the Department of Geography, University of Calcutta, received a grant from the AF to attend the conference of the International Geographic Union in Tokyo.
- 126 F/ 67(6) /AMS/1958/ MEA/ NAI. Letter to N.K. Pillai about the Asia Foundation, 31 December 1957.
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- 133 Ibid. Note by Leilamani Naidu 16 June 1955.
- 134 Ibid.
- 135 Chaudhary and Vanduzer-Snow. *The United States and India: A History Through Archives*:274
- 136 F/73(3)/AMS/1957/MEA/NAI Leilamani Naidu, June 16, 1955
- 137 Ibid.
- 138 Ibid.
- 139 F/72(17)/AMS/1955/MEA/ NAI
- 140 Ibid. MfM Newsletter, “200,000 Sindhi refugees in 7th year of privation: ‘T.B. Factory’ near Bombay seeks ‘shipload’ of MPF for vast rehabilitation plan”, summer 1954. A series of articles were published in the *Free Press Journal* that highlighted the plight of the 200,000 refugees and described their Kalyan and Ulhās Nagar camps in Bombay as a ‘T.B. factory’. The Sindhi leaders supposedly appealed to MfM for sponsoring a relief programme in the camp after reading about the MfM in a *Reader’s Digest* article.
- 141 Ibid.
- 142 Ibid.
- 143 Leonard A. Gordon. “Wealth Equals Wisdom? The Rockefeller and Ford Foundations in India,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 554, November, (1997):104
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## **5 Diplomatic encounters**

### **Asymmetric proximity**

#### **Wheat, weapons and wealth**

Post war, the ‘American Century’ juggernaut switched to top gear. It was fast but not rash. The United States did not shy away from seeking power as was its strategy after World War I.<sup>1</sup> In Asia, as in other parts of the world, it was guided by James Michener’s suggestion that,

The white man himself is finished in Asia as a ruler, administrator, or missionary..., he could return only by devising a new type of diplomacy geared to continent’s needs, so that the white man, his money and his technical skills will be invited back on Asians’ terms.<sup>2</sup>

After the war, the Indian elite requested the United States to remove the inequity in American immigration and naturalization laws and treat them on equal footing with the Chinese.<sup>3</sup> Clare Boothe Luce helped take up the India demand. She, along with Democrat Emanuel Celler, proposed the 1946 Luce-Celler Act that allowed 100 each of Filipinos and Indians to immigrate to the US per year.

Dean Acheson’s memorandum of 30 August 1946 anticipated ‘that the first action of the new government (in India) will be to request the exchange of full diplomatic representation between India and the United States’.<sup>4</sup> Exactly one year after the Royal Indian Naval Mutiny, Asaf Ali, the transport and communications minister in Nehru’s interim government,

assumed charge as India's first ambassador to the United States on 25 February 1947. This was followed by the appointment of Henry F. Grady as the first US ambassador at New Delhi.<sup>5</sup>

Besides immigration, American aid and investments were sought to push-start India's industrialization drive. In 1949, C.D. Deshmukh, India's financial representative in Europe and America, assessed that India needed half a billion dollars a year at least to achieve modest levels of improvement in living standards. India's river valley scheme required 'two and a half billion dollars within next ten years'.<sup>6</sup> The housing programs for industrial workers and transport development was estimated to cost two billion dollars each. The monetary need for education and health plans was expected to be one and a half billion dollars. Internal resources could generate not more than one-third billion a year. The gap had to be filled by foreign investments.<sup>7</sup> However, the loans were not forthcoming for India's industrialization, as America was spending on European reconstruction.

Next, faced with an acute fall in food grain production in 1950,<sup>8</sup> New Delhi requested 500,000 tons of milo at concessional prices from Washington. Only after a formal request from New Delhi, Washington recommend supplying wheat stocks that were 'used strictly for feeding poultry in the United States'.<sup>9</sup>

The American vacillations on wheat exports and Indian frustrations are excellently narrated by McMahon in his *Food as a Diplomatic Weapon: The India Wheat Loan of 1951*. The two problematic issues tied to wheat exports were supply of Indian minerals and stridency of Nehru's neutralism. Washington's dilly-dallying tactics enraged Nehru; he broadcast his frustration on All India Radio on 1 May 1950, stating that foreign aid should be free of political strings and conditions, 'which are unbecoming for a self-respecting nation to accept, any pressure to change our domestic or international policy'.<sup>10</sup>

India's old friends Dorothy Norman and Pearl Buck, combined with Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and leaders of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the National Council of Churches together formed a committee to urge their administration not to 'use hunger as a weapon to compel conformity'.<sup>11</sup>

The threat of communism was invoked as justification by Indians for seeking and by Americans for delivering wheat. On 12 February 1951, Truman's special message, titled "Indian Food Crisis – Opportunity to Combat Communist Imperialism",<sup>12</sup> strongly urged the eighty-second Congress to provide India with 'two million tons of grain in emergency food relief'.<sup>13</sup>

The entire saga of wheat diplomacy by America is summed up in a cartoon by Herblock of the *Washington Post*, titled "Sermon on the Mount". The cartoon depicted

a starving peasant woman and dying daughter at the foot of the mountain of U.S. wheat. On top of which a fat little figure smoking a cigar carried a tag '82 Congress' and the signboard in his hand read, 'You don't get anything for nothing in this world pal'.<sup>14</sup>

Less than six months into independence, India sent its third request to the US on 27 January 1948. India's defence attaché in Washington, Col B.M. Kaul, went to Pentagon headquarters with a shopping list of military equipment to meet the challenge posed by the Kashmir conflict. Kaul met Col J. Garling, in charge of the foreign military representatives, and requested quick delivery of 1000 jeeps and a dozen B-25 Mitchell bombers by May 1948 and another thirty-one bombers subsequently.<sup>15</sup> Nehru preferred Kaul to his ambassador, Asaf Ali, because the former was better networked with Louis Johnson<sup>16</sup> and other influential Americans. However, Kaul failed to get any response from Washington. The American indifference caused the Indian government to issue placatory statements, to signal to the Truman administration that Nehru's neutralism was not dogmatic. In April 1948, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, India's secretary general in the MEA, conveyed to the US State Department that 'India would under no circumstances align itself with the Soviet Union in a war between the latter and the US'. Bajpai further proposed 'sending an Indian military mission to the US to explore the possibility of obtaining military equipment'.<sup>17</sup> In September 1948, Nehru reiterated that 'under the existing circumstances there was not the least chance of India lining up with the Soviet Union'.<sup>18</sup>

Despite clarifications regarding India's allegiance to America, the arms embargo on India and Pakistan was not lifted. India renewed its efforts to procure arms by sending H.M. Patel, defence secretary to the USA. However, Patel returned empty handed.<sup>19</sup>

Loy Henderson, then head of the Near Eastern Affairs division of the State Department, favoured the lifting of the arms embargo on India. Henderson's contention was that the Indian Army was partially equipped with US arms that were left behind in India after the war and that these armament stores were in need of replacement.<sup>20</sup> The basis of his argument was that New Delhi could seek help from Moscow if the US denied it the much-needed weapons.<sup>21</sup> The arms embargo was lifted on 29 March 1949. However, before arms could start flowing, America extracted two minerals – beryl and monazite – from India that were crucial for its nuclear programme.<sup>22</sup>

The United States, the biggest steel maker of the world since the Second World War, depended on the Soviet Union for manganese during and even after the war. As the Cold War intensified, supplies of the strategically critical war material from the Soviet Union ceased. By 1949, India was exporting 25 per cent of the American manganese requirement.<sup>23</sup>

Despite receiving crucial mineral from India, America chose to ignore India's plight, and far from helping out with emergency aid, it eventually supplied wheat unfit for human consumption. India's acceptance of low-grade wheat and inability to bargain hard with America could be explained in terms of its diplomatic naivety and lack of understanding of international politics. But more importantly, why did America choose to maintain distance and annoy India?

## **Nehru's maiden visit to the USA**

Prior to embarking on his maiden visit to Washington in 1949, Nehru reassured the Americans that their private investments in India were safe from confiscation by Indian government. He also proclaimed that India was against nationalization of private industry for at least ten years.<sup>24</sup> The *New York Commercial and Financial Chronicle* picked up Nehru's 'un-socialist' statement and poked the British prime minister and Labour party leader

through a headline that read, 'Mr. Atlee please take note'.<sup>25</sup> American commentators in turn informed the American public of Nehru's commitment to the West. Vincent Sheean wrote that 'Nehru's socialism (which is in any case his own and not that of the Indian National Congress) has never fallen under communist domination or influence'. He further explained that 'Nehru was a man of the left in just about the same sense that Franklin Roosevelt was a man of the left'.<sup>26</sup>

Commenting on Nehru's socialistic leanings, Louis Fischer in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* wrote that 'more than being prime minister, Nehru was a militant anti-fascist of the thirties who remembers the sins of the appeasers and imperialists of the West'.<sup>27</sup>

Despite clarification by the US media and assurances from India about the flexibility of its neutrality and socialism, America displayed frosty detachment mainly because it wanted to avoid upsetting Britain, the chief trading and strategic partner of India. However, India's membership in the Commonwealth was not the sole reason for America's reluctance for direct intervention in India.

The fact was that the USA was involved in other areas of the world and was not keen to shoulder the burden of improving living standards in India and promise what it could not fulfil. The US National Security Council (NSC) assessment of India's strategic value in 1949 concluded that a poverty-stricken nation of 300 million 'would encumber rather than bolster US defences'.<sup>28</sup>

However, the equation changed once Mao's communist forces occupied mainland China in 1949; the American media started seeing Nehru as the 'spokesman of a troubled continent' and projected him as the 'world's most powerful individual'.<sup>29</sup> A Michigan paper stated, 'having written off China as a complete loss the state department apparently has decided that India offers the best bet for curbing communism in the Far East'.<sup>30</sup> Most of the US media looked at Nehru's 1949 visit to the United States as the beginning of a new era of collaboration between the two countries. It was viewed as an opportunity for India to emerge as a new power centre in Asia capable of filling the 'vacant spot left by the fall of Japan and loss of China'.<sup>31</sup>

Referring to Nehru's first impending visit to America in 1949, the Soviet newspaper *New Times* carried an article titled "Chiang Kai-shek's Successor", which said,

Nehru will be informed by Acheson ... of an aggressive Pacific bloc directed against the liberation movement of people of Asia. The British and American imperialists assign a special place in their unscrupulous plans to India and their present reactionary leader ... the vacancy left by Chiang Kai-shek is being offered to Nehru.<sup>32</sup>

The American media appreciated Nehru's initiative to hold an Asian conference on the question of Indonesia. *Life* wrote about atomic scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer's love for Indian scriptures like Bhagavad Gita and Hindu philosophy.<sup>33</sup> The movie *Light of India* that dealt with the Indian struggle against injustices in their society also opened in New York on 4 October 1949<sup>34</sup> before Nehru's arrival in Washington on 11 October 1949.

Such was the Indo-American bonhomie that while Nehru was in Washington, the *Washington Post* of 20 September 1949 published a picture of Vijayalakshmi Pandit with Bess Truman at the National Symphony Orchestra and wrote that Pandit was the 'only woman of sufficient experience, intelligence and ability to be the first woman president of the United States'.<sup>35</sup> Wallace R. Douel of *Chicago News* called Pandit the 'capital's most beautiful and exotic diplomatic hostess'.<sup>36</sup>

The Left in New York was not impressed with Nehru. G. Hagelberg called Nehru the 'leader of Indian bourgeoisie' in *The Daily Worker* on 16 October 1949.<sup>37</sup> He alleged that post war, Nehru had got into a deal with the emasculated British imperialists. 'To make the deal palatable to the Indian people, Nehru imported and adapted social democratic hocus pocus of the Third Force'. Hagelberg added that both at the Asian conference and during the Commonwealth meeting that discussed the support to the 'reactionary puppet regime of Burma', Nehru ensured them that Anglo-American imperialists were hurt the least. The India communists had a well-nigh similar view of Nehru's policies.

During his visit to the USA, Nehru was cautious not to ask for loans for the country. The general impression in America was that Nehru may not ask but he would surely expect some American 'do-gooders' to come out with a plan to give a few hundred million in order to make a good impression upon India. Nehru appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine of October 17, 1949. The magazine said that America would make no attempts to 'entangle Nehru and his 355 million countrymen,'. It further elaborated that 'there



would be no conferences of high state, no hint of alliances or pacts, no talk of loan or investments, unless Nehru requested'.<sup>38</sup>

The article insisted that America should wait for Nehru's formal request for help; this was, in fact, an enunciation of the doctrine that America was to adopt in dealing with Nehru. Whether it was on the issue of weapons or wheat, throughout Nehru's years as prime minister, America refused to willingly entangle with India's problems. It was as if non-alignment was being thrust upon Nehru. India could not depend on a friendly America to bail it out in times of need. America was a tough negotiator, almost indifferent towards India. Nehru would plead for help, compelled by circumstances and events, and capitulate on terms and conditions favourable to America. This was in sharp contrast to American use of its philanthropic organizations to make inroads into India. This sharp duality defined its relationship with India. India's friendly overtures were ignored.

America had a reason for avoiding overt embrace of India. In its initial engagements with India, America was guided by its experience of 'loss of China'. When Nehru visited America in 1949, the US media projected him as their best bet against advancing communism in Asia. However, the American establishment was careful not to weaken the nationalist forces in India by making Nehru look like Chiang Kai-shek, a leader under American control.

## **Why no FCN treaty for India?**

One of the first diplomatic instruments that the US employed in its engagement with India was the 1778 vintage treaty of friendship, commerce and navigation (FCN) that 'was for centuries a staple of international diplomacy'.<sup>39</sup> According to Wolfgang, the FCN treaties were 'more than a historical precursor to international investment agreements (IIA)' and they continued to 'influence and inspire modern investment treaty design'.<sup>40</sup> The expansion of US capital after the First World War necessitated greater focus on protecting overseas properties and investments of US investors.<sup>41</sup> The conclusion of the FCN treaty with maximum countries was one of the major goals of US foreign policy to establish post-war markets for US goods.

As early as 1939, Americans came to India with a draft Treaty of Establishment, Commerce, Navigation and Consular Rights. It asked for the same privileges and rights that the British nationals and corporations enjoyed in India.<sup>42</sup> The negotiations on the treaty were suspended in December 1942 because the British wanted to protect their exclusive rights and 'commercial safeguards' in India from American capital.<sup>43</sup>

In the beginning of 1945, Merrell, the secretary in charge at New Delhi, informed his state department that the 'belligerent nationalistic mood' in India was not conducive to restart the negotiations on the treaty. Sir Ardeshir Dalal told a visiting US trade mission that 'India intended to see that foreign interests did not, in the future, acquire majority ownership or control of any of India's industries'.<sup>44</sup>

Post war, the content and character of the treaty evolved. In February 1948, Henry Grady presented the FCN treaty in its new avatar. The actual discussions began in July 1949 when Professor Robert Wilson, adviser on commercial treaties to the US State Department, visited India. However, his efforts failed to achieve a breakthrough. The Americans wanted unrestricted entry for their capital and removal of trade barriers. India's precarious balance of payment situation and its obligations to the Commonwealth precluded the removal of exchange restrictions.<sup>45</sup> The negotiations remained stalled during the tenure of Ambassador Loy Henderson in Delhi due to wheat loan problems and America's preoccupation in the Korean War and also because India was yet to formulate its trade policy.

The negotiations resumed in 1952 with Chester Bowles at the helm in the US embassy at New Delhi. This time the Americans agreed to the Indian proposal of 'screening – selective and conditional admission of foreign investment'. This meant that any selected American enterprise would be treated on the principle of 'non-discrimination' vis-à-vis the Indian national companies dealing in similar activities. Initially the Americans wanted 'unconditional' MFN (most favoured nation) treatment to be included in the preamble to the treaty. The addition of the word 'unconditional' meant that any advantage accorded by India to a third country for a reciprocal favour would automatically accrue to the Americans. This word was dropped from the draft treaty. Later the Americans wanted the entire portion dealing with 'commercial and navigation' deleted and confine the draft treaty to 'friendship and establishment' aspects.

The discussions on the treaty had raised expectations in both countries, and the Economic Committee of Cabinet (ECC)<sup>46</sup> did not want a truncated treaty leading to bad press. Furthermore, the establishment part of the treaty was considered to be favouring the US businessmen more than the Indians. The commercial angle to the treaty gave it a more balanced look and semblance of mutuality and equality between the two countries.<sup>47</sup> India did not want to go in for outright rejection of the treaty that was expected to facilitate flow of dollar investments. Therefore, the ECC decided to resume negotiations with the USA on contentious issues, which related to the restrictions on imports, exports and customs duties.<sup>48</sup>

As the negotiations progressed, the settlement of the 'establishment' part of the treaty included the entry and movement of businesspersons into each other's territories based on MFN status. It also settled the issue of freedom of buying property in each other's land and the protection of compensation if the government acquired such a property.<sup>49</sup> However, negotiating the full treaty was a cumbersome process. It was finally decided to resolve the contentious issues piecemeal through separate agreements.

India entered into a limited investment guarantee agreement with the US in September 1957.<sup>50</sup> A joint statement issued during the visit of K.B. Lall, India's director general of foreign trade, to the USA in early 1958 promised 'to further the greatest possible degree non-discriminatory trade and currency convertibility'.<sup>51</sup> In November 1959, an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation was signed between the two governments. The proposal for concluding an expropriation guarantee agreement with the USA was also approved by the Indian cabinet. The FCN treaty negotiation introduced in 1939 culminated in 1957 without the treaty being signed in its original form and shape.

The question is, why did the US not force India to sign the treaty in its original form? Why did it allow the negotiation to linger on for more than a decade? The answer to these questions can be found in American experiences related to the signing of the treaty with China.

In 1943, China agreed to implement the FCN treaty on the completion of the war. The treaty came into existence in 1946. It was a big gain for American capital; however, its political fallout was negative. The FCN treaty offered the Chinese communists a political tool to challenge the nationalist credentials of the Nationalists. Inadvertently, the treaty aided in

pushing China towards communism, a 'loss' that was highlighted by the 'China Lobby' in America.<sup>52</sup>

In 1949, the twin topics of discussion around the world were the Chinese revolution and the US State Department's White Paper on *United States Relations with China* released in August 1949. The document spelled out the material and financial help rendered by Americans to the Chinese Nationalists. The critiques of the White Paper and 'Letter of Transmittal' asked why America was not neutral in the Chinese conflict. And why was anti-Americanism allowed to take root in China? It was alleged that the excessive American involvement helped the Communists gain public sympathy and discredit the Nationalists.<sup>53</sup> The policy was considered to have negatively impacted American interests in the Far East. The FCN treaty was one of the main culprits that a detrimental impact on Chiang Kai-shek's political fortunes, leading to the 'loss of China' to the communists. In India, the US did not want to provide ideological fodder to Indian communists to target Nehru.

## **The myth of rift**

The Indo-US collaboration began at the same time as the media was talking about the growing rift due to problems related to wheat procurement from America, the FCN treaty, India's ambiguous position in the Korean War and Krishna Menon's consistent diatribe against American imperialism. While the world was busy with Dulles-Menon verbal duels that had become the defining features of Indo-US ties from 1953 onwards, New Delhi and Washington were building an enduring relationship. When the public discourse was focussed on the independent foreign policy trajectory pursued by Nehru and Eisenhower's insistence on building military alliances in Asia, the two were engaged in cooperating at multiple levels. The military engagement between the two was pronounced. In 1951, India signed a reimbursable military aid agreement with the US and received, until the beginning of 1957, military goods and services worth \$38 million from the United States.<sup>54</sup> Until 1956, India had not turned to the Soviet Union for military supplies. The special privileges acquired by the American military in the Indian maritime and air space during the world war continued to be applicable in postcolonial India.

Despite an elaborate record of engagement, the Nationalist and realist analysis of Indo-US relations is largely based on the assumption that America expected confessed companionship and India refused to oblige; therefore, discord predominated the post-war Indo-US engagement. From the start of the armed conflict in Korea up to the Suez crisis, the relationship is often described as tumultuous, hinging on estrangement. It is insisted that the Indo-American meeting point in the 1950s was not one-sided as was the case in many other parts of the third world. It was politically at least a meeting of equals.<sup>55</sup> Indian historians attribute the post-independence distance in the relationship to American policy's obsession with power and its inability to understand India's compulsions.<sup>56</sup>

The Indo-US discord is explained in terms of India's canvassing for China's entry into the United Nations and its signing the 'Panchsheel' agreement with China in 1954.<sup>57</sup> Those who saw the 'agreement' as a major deviation from the Western bloc denounced it as an 'acknowledgement of India's unequivocal acceptance of China's sovereignty over Tibet'.<sup>58</sup>

In 1953, US Vice President Richard Nixon visited India ostensibly to allay Indian fears regarding American arms supplies to Pakistan. The perception of gap in the Indo-US geopolitical outlook was underpinned by the formation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) by America with Philippines, Thailand and Pakistan in September 1954. In 1955, America instituted the 'Baghdad Pact' that included Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Britain to strengthen its 'collective security' doctrine in Asia.<sup>59</sup> Notwithstanding the 'pactomania', by the mid-1950s America was 'India's largest foreign supplier of aid and by the end of the decade was giving more to India than to Pakistan'.<sup>60</sup>

The American support to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue added to the friction in the ties. In the beginning of 1957, India sought Soviet help to mitigate the impact of the Western pressure on the Kashmir issue. The American media charged India for defiance of the United Nations for seeking a Soviet veto on the Kashmir issue. The fortnightly report by the Indian embassy from Washington gave three examples of the relentless propaganda carried out against India.

First, *Life* magazine's editorial called India's stance on Kashmir 'a big new challenge' and an example of India's 'two faced moral standards'.<sup>61</sup> The second example was a reference to the *Washington Post* that published

a fake picture of the alleged migration of Muslims from the Kashmir valley to the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. This picture was distributed by United Press International (UPI) at the insistence of Pakistan's Ministry of Kashmir Affairs in Karachi. The authenticity of the picture was challenged by the Indian embassy in Washington. It was proved that a 1947 picture was used in 1957 to mislead the world press. After a prolonged argument, the *Washington Post* and UPI apologized to the Indian embassy.<sup>62</sup> The third example of India being targeted for its Kashmir policy was a quarter page advertisement in the *New York Times* by Edgar F. Ross. This advertisement was published at a time when pro-Israel sentiments in America were being inflamed and intense discussion between the US and Israel was underway for the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Sharm El Sheikh and Gaza. The advertisement advocated sanctions against India and read:

First (before sanctions are applied against Israel) let us have sanctions against Russia and India for their persistent and grave flouting of repeated UN resolutions on Hungary and Kashmir. Such sanctions against Russia and India will prove that large and small nations are treated with equal justice at the UN and that there is no double standard of morality in the world organization.<sup>63</sup>

The possibility of conflict with Pakistan spurred India to spend over a hundred crores rupees (one billion) during the first two years of the second five-year plan.<sup>64</sup> The escalation of tensions with Pakistan were partly the result of the internationalization of the Kashmir dispute and American military aid to Pakistan.

However, despite America's support to Pakistan, on the Kashmir issue the Indo-US cordiality peaked after India sought economic aid from America in 1956. This was the period when India was strengthening the concept of non-alignment among the postcolonial nations of Asia and Africa and increasing its interactions with the Soviet Union.

In the triumphalist American era, postcolonial India did not command full agency in the conduct of its foreign policy. Archival evidence indicates that even during the so-called estrangement, India-US engagement maintained a steady intensity, and the power asymmetry between the two largely determined the scope of their interactions. They cooperated in the

realms of nuclear know-how, economics and science; however, discord overshadowed cooperation because of America's overt arms and diplomatic support to Islamabad.

## **Asymmetry and proximity**

The huge asymmetry with America curtailed India's agency in terms of its foreign dealings. India had to follow the 'Battle Act' or the Mutual Defence Assistance Control Act of 1951, which was nothing more than a US municipal law. In 1953, India exported a small quantity of thorium nitrate to China. The US protested and reminded India of the Battle Act that prohibited such exports.<sup>65</sup> India had no formal military agreement with the US and was under no official obligation to abide by the act, yet it adhered to its provisions, which debarred countries cooperating with USA from exporting to the USSR and all countries under its domination.

From 1951, the Americans had been handing over the list of items banned under the act to MEA officials. As late as 1959, the list of items prohibited for export to communist countries under the Battle Act were exchanged with India. In December 1958, on a request from the US embassy, India reconfirmed its earlier commitment, to neither indulge in 'any act of aggression' against the US nor export the US-supplied equipment, material and services furnished to it under the Mutual Security Act of 1954.

Similar kind of pressure was applied by the US when India tried to resume air services with China. In 1955, America delayed clearance of the three Super Constellation aircraft purchased for Air India, which were to be delivered by 4 January 1955. The ostensible reason for the delay was the ongoing negotiation for the revision of the bilateral Air Treaty between the two countries. G.L. Mehta pointed out that the main reason behind non-supply of aircraft was the 'Indian government's intention to start air services to Peking'.<sup>66</sup> In his meeting with George Allen, the Indian ambassador had argued that the USA was not justified in opposing the opening up of India-China air traffic 'as several European services went to Prague and some of them were presumably using American aircraft'.<sup>67</sup>

The Indo-US military ties were a legacy of World War II. On 1 July 1947, the interim government, headed by Nehru, signed an agreement regarding

US military aircraft flights across India and the facilities to be accorded to them. United States Military Air Transport Service (MATS) planes were permitted night halt facilities at New Delhi and Calcutta, Agra, Santa Cruz and other airports.<sup>68</sup> In 1949, the Indian government renewed the agreement which permitted US military planes to fly across India and also agreed to the stationing of the American maintenance crew for aircraft repair and servicing.<sup>69</sup> India provided transit facilities to the US aircraft when the Korean conflict was at its peak. The US planes were not only engaged in military activities but were also being used by the CIA for covert operations in Tibet and elsewhere in Asia. There is an interesting file in the national archives at New Delhi that reveals how the MATS pilot indulged in gold smuggling either for private gains or on behalf of the CIA.

On 29 December 1954, the custom department of Calcutta nabbed W.B. Zadkar, a ground engineer of the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC), Calcutta, with two tin boxes containing illicit gold.<sup>70</sup> One box had ten bars of gold weighing 50 tolas (583 grams), each with no markings. The second box was filled with forty-two bars, each weighing 10 tolas (116 grams), with a marking 'NM Rothschild (Rothschild) & Sons RMR' and '10 tolas 999.0'.

Prior to joining BOAC in the mid-1940s, Zadkar served in the Royal Indian Air Force. During his five-month-old association with the smuggling gang, Zadkar handled gold worth £31,000. He confessed to the custom officials that on at least six occasions he picked up gold from the 'chokes' in the USA Air Force planes, 'Malts (MATs) Skymaster'. The customs report on the incident corroborated that in the period between the months of August and December 1954, nine US Air Force Douglas C-54 Skymaster planes and two Thai Airways aircraft night-stopped at Dum Dum airport.

Zadkar's revelations about the involvement of US military aircraft in the smuggling net led the customs collector to seek MEA's permission to rummage through the US Army aircraft. The MEA was reluctant to give a blanket clearance, because foreign military aircraft could be searched only on confirmed suspicion that they were carrying arms, ammunitions and other military hardware. The customs collector argued that the immunity accorded to military aircraft was invalid if they carried contraband in violation of the customs regulations.

The incident triggered an interdepartmental debate in New Delhi. On 1 February 1955, the Ministry of Finance (Revenue Division) passed an order



stating that ‘if the customs authorities have a definite suspicion that any article (including those other than arms) are being smuggled into or from India in military aircraft, they will be perfectly within their right to search such aircraft and their personnel’.<sup>71</sup>

In June 1954, India prohibited MATS flights from ferrying service personnel in uniform and carrying arms and ammunition. Prior to the government of India’s order, MATS flights were routinely carrying troops in uniform.<sup>72</sup> From 1 July 1955, the Indian government started applying landing and housing charges on MATS flights using civil airports in India. In 1962, the US asked for these charges to be waived. In addition, it also wanted a visa waiver for the crew members of MATS aircraft flying in and out of India.<sup>73</sup> All these concessions were granted to the United States to meet the requirements of 1962 India-China war.

The exceptionally strong Indo-US bilateral military ties ensured that the American embassy in India was privileged to enjoy exclusive rights to permanently position and operate two US military aircrafts. The two Dakotas were permanently stationed opposite the flying control room of New Delhi’s Palam airport, for both local and international travel by the US naval and air attachés.<sup>74</sup> Indonesia was the only other non-aligned country where the US embassy had military aircraft permanently stationed under an approval that was granted to the US by Dutch authorities who had ruled Indonesia.

The permission to operate aircraft within India for official purposes was granted in 1946, by the then war department (Air Branch) of the government of India to the United States Military Observer Group. The facility was further extended on 8 September 1952. The US embassy replaced their air attaché’s aircraft VB 17G No. 44–85482 with VC-47D No 43–48321 on 10 November 1953.<sup>75</sup>

In the first half of 1959, the US embassy in New Delhi requested MEA for the grant of multiple entry visas for the crew of their two aircraft stationed in India. The External and Home Affairs Ministry raised no objection to the grant visas to the crew. The Directorates of Air Intelligence and the Military Intelligence did not find the presence of two aircraft objectionable. However, the military intelligence did enquire about the activities of these foreign aircraft to maintain a check on them. The intelligence agency felt that the presence of the aircraft nullified the

effectiveness of security measures that were in force concerning aerial photography and maps. The Indian Air Force said that the aircraft were not likely to resort to 'a dangerous type of aerial photography', as no special cameras were fitted on the aircraft.<sup>76</sup> The Indian foreign secretary wanted the US naval and air attaché's aircraft to be licenced under Indian aircraft regulations. However, this could not be done because the aircraft were not registered in India.<sup>77</sup>

The US embassy's justification was that the aircraft enabled their naval and air attaché to travel in India and also to countries to which they were concurrently accredited. The most bizarre reason offered by the embassy was that the aircraft helped their attachés to put in a certain number of flying hours required under the US law. It was, however, never asked as to how India was obligated to help the US military pilots on diplomatic duties to log in the mandatory flying hours.

According to MEA's legal adviser, international law did not contain any rule that conferred upon diplomatic missions a right to keep planes in host states. It was completely within the receiving government's discretion to grant or refuse such a request from a foreign country. New Delhi had the right to revoke or alter the permission granted to the US embassy. However, it decided to continue with the arrangement. In fact in early 1963, a third US aircraft, U8D, was sanctioned to the American embassy at New Delhi. It was said that the third aircraft was to be 'employed almost exclusively to further the military assistance program' in the wake of the 1962 war. Interestingly, these planes were exempt from customs checks.

The Indian sea custom provisions also barred boats carrying arms and ammunition to transit through Indian ports. However, when it came to US ships carrying arms, the Indian authorities adopted a liberal approach. On 1 December 1954, two American ships, *Jefferson* and *Flying Eagle*, were detained at Bombay port because one of them had a tank in its cargo.<sup>78</sup> The vessels were allowed to proceed only after the American consul general gave a written assurance 'to prevent repetition of such offences on part of the US flagged vessels'. In early February 1955, the US embassy asked MEA to forgo the cargo inspection of *Steel Architect* at Bombay port and allow it to sail towards Manila after unloading its other cargo in Bombay. The ship carried a 100-ton PNG gunboat laced with guns.<sup>79</sup> After receiving the waiver from Indian authorities, the US embassy revealed the *Steel*

*Architect's* plan to off-load non-military cargo at the Portuguese-ruled Goa. In view of the MEA protests against the halt of the ship at Goa, the Americans cancelled it, but only after conveying that the cancellation was their special concession to India.<sup>80</sup>

## **Nuclear cooperation**

Not only was India helping America in smooth conduct of overt and covert air operations in Asia, but America too was assisting India to acquire civil nuclear capability. In 1954, the new atomic policy of the United States, commonly referred to as 'Atoms for Peace', approved proliferation of nuclear material and reactors 'under statutory agreements... . In the late 1950s, we [US] sold about 25 research reactors abroad, and the Soviet Union also made reactors available to several countries including Ghana, Egypt, Yugoslavia and many of the East European countries'.<sup>81</sup>

The Indo-US nuclear cooperation in the mid-1950s was spearheaded by the US Technical Cooperation Mission (TCM) established on 5 January 1952 to implement President Truman's 'Point Four Program'. The TCM enjoyed diplomatic immunity in India; it was renamed the US Agency for International Development (USAID) on 8 February 1962. TCM provided scientific and medical research radioisotope tracer equipment to three leading Indian institutes engaged in agricultural, scientific and medical research. Dr James Blume, the American soil chemist, set up the Central Radiotracer Laboratory at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), Pusa at New Delhi, in 1954. The US Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) supplied radioactive phosphorous to India.<sup>82</sup>

The *Hindustan Times* of 11 July 1959 reported on the Indo-US nuclear cooperation since 1954. The US had presented a library of research reports and scientific abstracts on US atomic energy developments to Atomic Energy establishment at Bombay in January 1956.<sup>83</sup> In the same year, India purchased 21 tons of heavy water from the US.<sup>84</sup> Twenty-one Indian nuclear scientists were trained in the USA under the TCM training programme until 1959. '18 [out of the 21 scientists] attended 10-month courses in nuclear engineering at the International School of Nuclear

Sciences and Engineering in Lamont, Illinois'. The newspaper reported that '14 more [scientists were] scheduled to go to the US in 1959'.<sup>85</sup>

The *Hindustan Times* report was actually a prelude to the bigger story that appeared in the Indian press on 12 July 1959 about the historic signing of a contract between the US AEC and the Indian government for lease of 15 tons of heavy water to India. It was for the first time that AEC leased heavy water to a foreign government. Prior to 15 August 1958, all transactions in heavy water by the AEC were on a sale basis.<sup>86</sup> The only glitch in this otherwise happy story was a *faux pas* by the US embassy.

The joint press statement about the nuclear contract that was to be released 13 July at 9 A.M. was given to the media a day in advance by the United States information service (USIS) in Delhi.<sup>87</sup>

The news story was significant because it related to nuclear energy and, in Nehru's words, 'use of atoms for humanity'.<sup>88</sup> It was also important because it signalled India's geopolitical choices to the Soviet Union and China. The Soviets who were equally keen to commercialize their nuclear know-how approached India for nuclear cooperation. Dr Homi Bhabha met Dr A.K. Krassin, director of the Atomic Power Station, in Russia on 7 January 1957 and informed Nehru that the USSR was willing to have Indian workers at the International Institute for Nuclear Research. Bhabha recommended greater interactions with the Russian nuclear establishment because he felt that the institute had the biggest accelerator in the world. The USSR was also willing to supply India spectrograph and separation equipment. As far as heavy water was concerned, the price that Krassin quoted was Rs. 3000 per kilogram, which was nearly ten times the price at which India bought heavy water from the United States, approximately Rs. 308 per kilogram.<sup>89</sup> This was also when the Geneva Convention on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy encouraged nuclear scientists from both blocs to cooperate.

The Indo-US cooperation extended not only into the military arena, but also into the aerospace domain. In 1957, Uttar Pradesh State Observatory at Nainital set up a Baker-Nunn camera for optical tracking of satellites in collaboration with the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO).<sup>90</sup> In 1960, Vikram Sarabhai became the scientific chair of the UN Committee of Peaceful Uses of Outer Space. In the first half of 1961, Sarabhai began exploring the possibility of cooperation in establishing a satellite acquisition

facility at Ahmedabad to receive telemeter data from NASA Explorer XI gamma ray astronomy experiment.<sup>91</sup> According to the deal, NASA gave some receiving equipment, tapes and recorders on an indefinite loan basis. The Ahmedabad laboratory provided the labor, time standard and test equipment. The programme originated from the S-15 gamma ray astronomy satellite for which the equipment was set up by Professor Rossi's cosmic ray group at M.I.T. The experiment was significant for the study of Van Allen radiation belts.<sup>92</sup> The purpose of this was to measure the intensity of gamma radiation, electrons and the various components of cosmic radiation in inner and outer space. This scientific deal was reflected in the joint communiqué that was issued by Prime Minister Nehru and US Vice President Johnson on the conclusion of latter's visit to India in 1961.<sup>93</sup>

In 1959, the Indian government allowed the US Navy Hydrographic Office to operate aircraft from its airports for the geomagnetic surveys of ocean areas. In return, they promised to provide India with the survey results.<sup>94</sup> The project ('Magnet') involved two modified US navy transport planes, each carrying a crew of ten US Navy personnel and geophysicists and equipped with a vector airborne magnetometer and special navigation equipment.<sup>95</sup> The Indian Navy and the Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs (SR & CA) provided one officer each for the respective flights. The operation was completed on 27 January 1960.<sup>96</sup>

## **The American aid arrives**

In 1956, the second five-year plan was in jeopardy due to paucity of funds.<sup>97</sup> The foreign exchange reserves were crucial to the success of the Second Plan because rapid industrialization demanded import of capital goods and machinery.<sup>98</sup> The foreign exchange shortfall to the tune of Rs. 11 billion was expected in 1956–61.<sup>99</sup> By April 1956, a steep fall in the sterling assets held by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) put excessive stress on the balance-of-payment situation in the country.<sup>100</sup>

To tackle the situation, 'the government cut the import quota for January–June 1957 and almost entirely shut off fresh commitments for investments

for the next three months'.<sup>101</sup> Twice in a period of six months, the government amended the RBI Act.<sup>102</sup>

India asked for help from the World Bank to sustain the second five-year plan. In a *New York Times* interview, Nehru spoke of India's need for assistance from the United States to the extent of \$500 to \$600 million.<sup>103</sup> J. Sherman Cooper, then US ambassador to India, expressed his concerns about the readjustment challenges faced by the Indian economy and its impact on democracy. His 7 December 1956 telegram to Washington explicitly stated:

Internal economic crisis which unless resolved, could mean rapid erosion of India's democratic forms and the faith of her present leaders, notably Nehru himself, that India can achieve a democratic Asian counterpoise to Red China without resort to authoritarian techniques which could progressively shift India into the Communist orbit.<sup>104</sup>

Commenting on Nehru's ensuing visit to the USA, Cooper's telegram further elaborated India's growing economic and strategic vulnerability:

Nehru therefore comes to Washington in a sensitive position of weakness. He and his advisers know that they have fumbled internationally, that UK no longer represents acceptable alternative leadership to US, and that they are in grave economic difficulties.<sup>105</sup>

Nehru sent a team consisting of Finance Minister T.T. Krishnamachari and RBI governor H.V.R. Iyengar to the World Bank in September 1957 to reassure World Bank President Eugene Black that

The 'socialism' contemplated in India does not, by any stretch of imagination mean communism; it does not mean state capitalism... . It is a system under which private competitive enterprise has and will continue to have a vital role to play; it is a system which respects private property and provides for the payment of compensation if such property is acquired by the State. I submit there is nothing in the

system which should be repugnant to the social conscience of the USA.<sup>106</sup>

On 14 September 1957, the *Saturday Evening Post* published an illustrated feature entitled “India Faces the Facts of Life” along with a picture of S.K. Patil, Krishnamachari and Morarji Desai, ‘friends of capitalism (who) now find themselves in the ascendancy’. The subtitle said, “fed up with socialists and empty promises, India in crisis is turning to capitalism it scorned”.<sup>107</sup>

By June 1957, G.L. Mehta was confident that America would assist India because it saw ‘political interest in assisting India’s development, with an eye particularly to the competition between India and China’. An American trade delegation led by F. Peterson Forbes visited India in May 1957.<sup>108</sup> In the same month, Mehta signed a \$9.8 million loan agreement at the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) for the expansion of a thermal electric plant at Trombay near Bombay.<sup>109</sup>

The foreign exchange difficulties of India were widely covered in the American media. The *Christian Science Monitor* blamed India’s overambitious second five-year plan for the crisis in the Indian economy. The 13 September 1957 issue of the magazine reminded Washington that in view of the instability in Indonesia, Laos and elsewhere, the experienced political dispensation in India was best suited to prevent India’s slippage into the communist fold. The article urged the Eisenhower administration to deal with the Indian situation imaginatively, and that ‘a combination of private credits and sizable government loan from Washington might keep the five-year plan rolling’.<sup>110</sup>

The *St. Louis Post Dispatch* had a long editorial, captioned ‘India must be saved’. The *Christian Science Monitor* supported quick relief for India and its report on the subject said,

Much as some Washington planners might wish to make ‘safe’ a smaller Asian friend a showcase with which to influence the rest of the uncommitted world, it is the big competition that counts. India is a showcase for democracy in Asia, like it or not. And if its stock runs low, the uncommitted nations will turn to communist China’s showcase in their search for a method of bettering their conditions.<sup>111</sup>

By the end of December 1957, there was a growing realization of India's relevance for the democratic world. In a TV survey by the Columbia Broadcasting System network, its Far Eastern representative, Peter Kalischer, said, 'Surprisingly enough, our big asset in India is Prime Minister Nehru. Americans often feel that Nehru is splitting hair when India should be splitting logs, but he is a working democrat who wants to make a mid-wife form of socialism work'.<sup>112</sup>

*The New York Herald Tribune* observed,

Before Congressmen and other foes of any kind of "foreign aid" start screaming, it would be wise to consider what this loan means to India and to this country... . If the future explodes in their faces now, the prospects of survival of free India would not be bright.

On the issue of Indian loan, the *Sacramento Bee* of 28 September 1957 mildly said,

But should it (the loan) be given, would it be too much to ask in return that Prime Minister Nehru at least admit Uncle Sam is sometimes on the side of the angles and cease and desist from so much genuflection towards Moscow.<sup>113</sup>

Advocating greater efforts to understand India, especially in context of a crisis building up in the Far East, *The New York Times* wrote,

It is – or should be – of far less importance to us whether we precisely approve of India's foreign policy or the irritating statements of some of her leaders than whether India remains fundamentally in the side of freedom and democracy which is where it is today. In international politics, friendly words count far less than community of interest and the United States has intense community interests with India.<sup>114</sup>

Those advocating India's case won when the World Bank set up a permanent mission in New Delhi in late 1957 and 'organized a prompt and substantial loan operation that enabled India to meet its immediate foreign exchange obligations'.<sup>115</sup>



In August 1958, the World Bank formed the 'Aid India Club' comprising representatives of the major Western donor nations as well as the World Bank and its affiliate, the International Development Association.<sup>116</sup>

In the first six months of 1957, India imported from the USA goods worth \$236 million as compared to only \$118 million in the corresponding period of 1956. The 100 per cent increase reflected increased import of agricultural commodities under PL-480 and machinery vehicles and metals for development projects. At the same time, US imports from India in the first half of 1957 amounted to \$108 million and were slightly higher than the imports in the corresponding period of 1956.<sup>117</sup> On 19 September 1957, India and the USA signed a convertibility agreement to encourage private US investments in India.

While the economic cooperation with the US was moving smoothly, the political differences between the two over Kashmir continued to persist, and the media continued to attack India on the issue. The criticism in the media did not mean that the Eisenhower administration had turned its back on India. In fact, during this phase, the strengthening of democracy in India through the successful conduct of the second general elections in 1957 was praised in the United States. During this period, the US Congress approved the sale of twelve Liberty ships from the 'mothball' fleet for coastal trade in India through a private resolution in the Congress.<sup>118</sup> One of the widely circulated magazines in America included Nehru among the six most powerful men in the world, which also included Eisenhower, Khrushchev, Mao Zedong, Tito and Pope Pius.<sup>119</sup>

## **The Kennedy-Cooper rescue act**

In late 1950s, the Indo-US ties gathered momentum with an economic initiative by two US senators. The Kennedy-Cooper duo recommended the US Congress to create an 'International Advisory Group representing potential donor nations to examine India's needs and plans in order to make precise recommendations to member governments'. The duo urged Canada, Great Britain, Germany and Japan to form an international consortium to make 'proportional sacrifice and commitments to meet' India's needs.<sup>120</sup>

On 19 February 1959, Kennedy and Cooper submitted a resolution proposing that the USA invite other friendly countries to join a 'Free World Mission' to visit India to discuss the possibilities for joint action in the economic development of India. He recommended urgently increasing the resources of the Development Loan Fund (DLF) so as to make credits on a long-term basis. This plea was made with reference to the need for assistance of all underdeveloped countries, but the tenor of Senator Kennedy's speech implied that a substantial portion of DLF allotment should go to India.

The justification for the India focus was not only its poverty-stricken population of 400 million but also for economic and geopolitical reasons. Kennedy, in a passionate plea to the Senate, said that in India he saw an opportunity to move 'the western alliance along more constructive channels – about making something more out of it than an anti-Soviet venture'.<sup>121</sup>

A copy of Kennedy's speech and the draft of the resolution, especially related to India, were sent to the Indian ambassador in Washington on the morning of the day it was to be presented in the House. From India's point of view, the resolution was almost perfect. The ambassador proposed a minor change – the removal of one word in the line, 'to assure the fulfilment of India's second five-year plan and the effective design of the "Third Plan"'. The ambassador felt that the particular phrase gave an impression that the USA and other developed Western countries would have a say in the formulation of India's third five-year plan. Therefore, he suggested deleting the word 'design'. However, the proposed change could not be incorporated because the resolution had already been printed and distributed in the Senate.<sup>122</sup> Insisting on the significance of the year 1959, Kennedy stressed,

This [1959] is the critical year for India. This is the year when the Second Five Year plan will prove to be either fruitful or futile. This is also the year when the *Third Plan beginning in 1961 will be designed* [emphasis added]. This is the year, in short, when India must appraise her future and her relations with rest of the world. I do not say that India could not tread water for a few more years before going under. But this is the year the Indians need confidence that they can plan

major efforts for long-range progress with some assurance of substantial long-term assistance from the Western World.<sup>123</sup>

While Kennedy's reason for extending support in 1959 was India's dwindling economy, Senator Gale William McGee made the geopolitical reasons behind Kennedy's urgency to help India amply clear when he spoke about the shifting of American focus westward towards the Pacific and the manner in which the relevance of China and India was on the rise. McGee made his point by stating,

I dare predict that in the time of those who listen to me today, *our real concern in the world may not be Moscow, but possibly Peiping [Beijing] or New Delhi* [emphasis added]; indeed, what was once Atlantic age of history will be swept away, or at least supplemented by new Pacific age of history. That puts us in a unique position. It means that if only we can have the confidence that expansion requires, we can meet the threat which the Soviets and even the Chinese now have forced upon us.<sup>124</sup>

On 29 December 1960, the US Development Loan Fund granted a \$30 million loan to a public sector unit, Hindustan Chemicals and Fertilisers Limited, to cover the foreign exchange cost of building a fertilizer plant at Trombay near Bombay. A number of private firms from the US evinced interest in setting up new plants.<sup>125</sup> On 4 January 1961, the US gave a \$50 million loan to India at 5.75 per cent interest for the purchase of capital equipment from the United States to meet the development goals envisaged in the third five-year plan. The loan was channelled through the Import-Export Bank.<sup>126</sup> The Aid India consortium placed at India's disposal \$2245 million. The World Bank and the International Development Association contributed \$400 million to provide India immediate support to cover import orders for the years 1961–62 and 1962–63.<sup>127</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Power asymmetries shaped the early diplomatic engagements between India and the US. The Americans avoided making a forced entry into India; they insisted on being invited to establish their informal empire. For the India elite, America was their first and best choice for food and arms support. The need to look at the Soviet Union was never felt in the first five years after independence. India wanted to be trusted by America and it assured them that its allegiance to neutrality and socialism was flexible.

Initial American dealings with India were guided by its experience of 'loss of China'. Therefore, when Nehru visited America in 1949, their media hailed him as their best bet against advancing communism in Asia. However, the American establishment was careful not to weaken the nationalist forces in India by making Nehru look resemble Chiang Kai-shek, a nationalist serving American interests. During this time, America allowed Britain to continue handling India. However, the approach underwent a change after the Suez crisis.

The phase before the Suez crisis was marked by ups and downs in the Indo-US ties. Two American military aircraft were permanently stationed in India and had the right to fly anywhere in India or abroad. Americans were also provided a fuelling and maintenance base for their military and CIA planes on their way to operations in Korea, Tibet and other theatres in Asia. Although the two also cooperated in the realms of nuclear, economics and science, however, the general outlook on the strength of the relationship remained negative because of the US support to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and the increase in military sales to Islamabad.

Both on economic as well as strategic fronts, India's engagement with America increased manifold from 1957 onwards. India sought American help to tide over the foreign exchange crisis. It ignored the US-Pakistan strategic nexus and positively engaged with the US. In this phase, India's experience in its dealing with America was more pleasing than what it had been during the wheat loan negotiations in the early 1950s. America was more forthcoming and gathered a consortium to provide economic assistance to India. The relationship became more open and cordial.

## Notes

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- 6 F/1591203/P/1949/Cabinet Secretariat (hereafter CS)/NAI:12
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- 8 Ram Nath Chopra. *Evolution of Food Policy in India*, (New Delhi, 1981):54–55. Also see David W. Hooper. *A Perspective on India's Food Production – Lecture-6*, (Coromandel, 1976)
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- 10 Ibid: 373
- 11 Ibid: 359
- 12 Ibid: 365
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Harris Wofford. *Lohia and America Meet- 1951 and 1964*, (New Delhi, 2001):63. The cartoon was drawn when India's opposition leader Rammanohar Lohia was discussing India's Food Bill with the editor of *Washington Post* on 20 July 1951 during his visit to the United States.
- 15 Manakkal Sabhesan Venkataramani. "An Elusive Military Relationship, Part I," *Frontline*, April 9, (1999):68
- 16 Krishnaswamy Subrahmanyam. "Arms and Politics," *Strategic Analysis*, vol. 29, January, (2005). Also see Welles Hangen. *After Nehru, Who?* (London, 1963):254–255. Johnson mediated during the first Cripps mission in 1942 and he became the US secretary of defense in the Truman administration.
- 17 Manakkal Sabhesan Venkataramani. "An Elusive Military Relationship, Part II," *Frontline*, April 23, (1999):63
- 18 Manakkal Sabhesan Venkataramani. "The Indian Military Mission," *Frontline*, May 7, (1999):63
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- 20 Ibid: 65. On 30 July 1948, India enquired regarding spares for the obsolete Steward tank that had been left behind in India by the US. India was informed that those were no longer manufactured.
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- 22 Manakkal Sabhesan Venkataramani. "The Indian Military Mission": 66
- 23 Manakkal Sabhesan Venkataramani. "Manganese as a Factor in Indo-American Relations," *India Quarterly*, vol. XIV, April-June, (1958):137
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- 25 Ibid. The Press Review (hereafter PR) September 11–17, 1949.
- 26 Ibid. PR 10–19 October 1949. Quoted Vincent Sheean, "Prime Minister Nehru," *New Republic*, 10 October 1949.
- 27 Ibid. Quoted Louis Fischer's letter published in the *New York Times*, 16 October 1949.
- 28 Cullather. *The Hungry World*:134
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- 31 Ibid. For Nehru's visit to the US, also see Ramachandra Guha. *India After Gandhi – The History of World's Largest Democracy*, (New York, 2007):155–158

- 32 Nayantara Sahgal. *Jawaharlal Nehru: Civilizing the Savage World*, (New Delhi, 2010):22
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- 43 Ibid: 277
- 44 Ibid: 272
- 45 F/7(11)/ECC/1952/Cabinet Secretariat (CS)/NAI
- 46 Ibid: 59. The EEC consisted of J.L. Nehru, prime minister; C.D. Deshmukh, finance minister; Jagjivan Ram, communications minister; N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar, defence minister; K.N. Katju, home minister; T.T. Krishnamachari, commerce and industry minister; Sardar Swaran Singh, housing and supply minister; V.V. Giri, labour minister and K.C. Reddy, minister of production.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 Ibid. Under the agreement, the US government 'extended insurance to US investors in India against possible risk of currency inconvertibility in respect of their profits and capital repatriation relating to investments approved by the government of India for such insurance'.
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- 74 F/57(3)/AMS/1959/MEA/NAI. On 19 March 1959.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 F/73(9)/AMS/1955/MEA/NAI:6
- 79 Ibid: 1. 4 February 1955, Archibald Robinson Randolph, first secretary of the US embassy, met Humayun Mirza of MEA regarding the special waiver for the US vessel. *Steel Architect* was owned by Isthmian Line, Norfolk (Virginia). It carried a government-to-government shipment from the US to the Philippines. The ship left Djibouti on 31 December 1954 and reached Bombay harbour on 7 February 1955.
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- 91 F/73(58)/AMS/1961/MEA/NAI
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- 93 Ibid.
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- 116 Ibid.
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## **6 From Tibet towards war**

In India-US ties, 1959 was a watershed year. India became an important Western ally because of its status ‘as the foremost of the world’s poorer neutrals’.<sup>1</sup> The coming together of the two democracies was accompanied by the widening of the India-China rift. The arrival of the Dalai Lama in April 1959 was followed by the first border clashes on the Indo-Chinese border in August. In December, President Eisenhower received a grand reception in New Delhi. By 1959, even Krishna Menon’s relations with America had improved. The former remained silent on Lebanon and the Taiwan Strait crisis and conveyed to Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker that ‘the moral stature of the U.S. has increased during the last two years’.<sup>2</sup>

Both on economic as well as strategic fronts, India’s engagement with America increased manifold. In fact, 1959–62 was the best period in Indo-American ties. During the three-year period, India and America disagreed on some issues but mainly traded favours. India gave the US what it wanted, asylum for the Dalai Lama and hostility towards China. In addition, the Indian peacekeeping force helped the US achieve its goals in Congo. Washington praised the Indian peacekeeping force in neutralizing Tshombe and preventing the fragmentation of Congo.<sup>3</sup>

US also commended India’s role in Laos and its leadership of the International Control Commission that was established in 1954 to implement the ceasefire agreement between Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and France. Three separate Commissions were set up, one each for Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Each Commission had India as chair and Canada and Poland as members. The Commission was supported by forces drawn from India, Canada and Poland. India had provided one infantry battalion and

supporting staff. The Geneva Accord created Laos as a neutral, buffer state between Thailand and Vietnam.

In return, the US only condemned but took no punitive action against India's use of force in Goa. In fact, it supported the right of Goans to self-determination from colonial rule. Since Portugal was a NATO member, the US went through the motions of supporting the Western powers that moved a resolution against India's aggression in the Security Council (SC). As expected, the resolution was vetoed by the Soviet Union. Before the Indian forces had moved into Goa, Ambassador Galbraith informed Nehru that if the Goan issue came to the SC, 'we would be obliged to take stand against India, not with a view to embarrassing him but consistent with our opposition to use of force'.<sup>4</sup> After the operation, President JFK told India: 'You spend the last fifteen years preaching morality to us, and then you go ahead and act the way any *normal country* [emphasis added] would behave'.<sup>5</sup> Kennedy did not find anything abnormal in the actions of the Indian state in Goa; his problem was with Gandhian morality and non-violence that India advocated for other countries. Therefore, Kennedy's statement can be interpreted as his endorsement of India's use of force as a sign of its return to normalcy.

Scholarly work on the India-China war considers it to be devoid of Cold War complications. According to Whiting, who has brilliantly reconstructed the subversive activities of the US and Taiwanese agents in Tibet, the Tibetan factor has been 'virtually ignored in most analyses of the 1962 conflict'.<sup>6</sup> According to Bruce Riedel's recent work – *JFK's Forgotten Crisis, Tibet, the CIA and the Sino-Indian War* – the CIA was involved in fomenting rebellion in Tibet in the mid-1950s, and both Pakistan and India were intricately involved in the American game plan.<sup>7</sup> An important work on the Indo-US collaboration on the Tibetan issue is S. Mahmud Ali's *Cold War in the High Himalayas – The USA, China and South Asia in the 1950s*. Ali posits, Tibet was 'one of the world's most expensive failures, but that failure itself was merely an instrument of the strategy being pursued jointly by the United States and newly independent India to "bleed" communist China and thereby neutralize its effectiveness'.<sup>8</sup>

The chapter uses Jayaprakash Narayan's (JPN) private papers to explore the emergence of a pro-Tibet lobby in India comprising of Hindu nationalists and pro-American Indian socialists. The lobby collaborated

with the American and Indian non-government agencies in helping the Dalai Lama's organization sustain its stay in India.

This chapter examines the enhanced Indo-US interactions prior to the outbreak of war that undermined the principle of non-alignment. It argues that India did not compromise on non-alignment on 19 November 1962 when Nehru requested President Kennedy to provide air power backup to face the Chinese attacks;<sup>9</sup> instead, non-alignment collapsed on the day America was allowed to use Indian soil to carry out covert operations to support the separatist movement in Tibet. The turning point in the Indo-US ties was President Eisenhower's visit to India and its linkages to the build-up of India-China hostilities.<sup>10</sup>

## **The Tibet entanglement**

The American involvement in Tibet began in the mid-1930s. Theos Bernard, a student of philosophy at the University of California, travelled to India and Tibet in 1937 to understand Indian mysticism and tantric powers. On his return from Tibet, Bernard set up a yoga centre in his university and became a leading religious figure in America.<sup>11</sup> Bernard, identified as 'White Lama', married a 53-year-old famous opera singer Ganna Walska in 1942. Bernard was Walska's sixth husband. She bought for him a 32-acre estate, which was named 'Tibet land', and a mountain retreat which Bernard named 'Penthouse of the Gods'. Both the properties were meant to receive Tibetan monks, who never arrived. The British intelligence spotted White Lama in Calcutta in 1947, from where probably he never returned.<sup>12</sup>

The American Alpine Club (ACC) linked to the US Army's elite 10th Mountain Division took interest in the mountains surrounding Tibet and Sikkim. In 1942, Leo Tolstoy's grandson Lt Col Ilia Tolstoy of the United States Army along with his buddy, Lieutenant Brooke Dolan, made a journey to Lhasa from Sikkim. They were emissaries of President Roosevelt and were assisted by British intelligence. One of the gifts they carried for the Dalai Lama was an autographed portrait of President F.D. Roosevelt. They also presented the Tibetan government with a wireless set to establish their own communication network. The American military men video-recorded their expedition and stay at Lhasa. On Tolstoy's return to India in

1944, O.K. Caroe enthusiastically reported to R.T. Peel at India Office, London:

From what Colonel Tolstoy has told us there is no doubt that they were impressed with the Tibetan case for independence and may be regarded as future American missionaries in that cause... . There seems to be some hope that informed American opinion may not be so far from the appreciation of the actual position and the means to be adopted to do justice to Tibet. Colonel Tolstoy is now a member of the American Office of the Strategic Services (OSS) and will no doubt make it his business to inoculate that organization with his ideas about Tibet.<sup>13</sup>

Until late 1946, the American forays into Tibet were strictly ‘unobtrusive and unofficial’,<sup>14</sup> to avoid jeopardizing American relations with Chiang Kai-shek. To deepen American involvement in Tibet’s political status, the British requisitioned the services of A.T. Steele, a *Chicago Daily* reporter.<sup>15</sup> Steele wrote five articles on life and religion in Tibet, which he described as the ‘land of medieval charm and peerless alpine beauty’.<sup>16</sup> The British republished the entire series, ‘In the Kingdom of Dalai Lama’.<sup>17</sup> Despite Steele’s efforts, T.A. Raman (the acting public relations officer at the office of the agent-general for India, Washington) informed that the articles did not evoke any editorial comment or political reaction and were regarded only as good travel stories.<sup>18</sup>

With the departure of Chiang Kai-shek from mainland China, both the United States and the United Kingdom recalibrated their Tibet strategy. Post-war America became pro-active in Tibet. London took a backseat, in order to protect its stakes in Hong Kong. Initially, Nehru followed the British policy of non-confrontation with Mao. But his detractors felt that his doctrine of “defence by friendship”<sup>19</sup> was an appeasement of communists which helped the growth of communism in India and abroad. Therefore, when the Chinese communists took control of Tibet in 1950, the right wing in India saw it as an opportunity to discredit the communists. The CIA considered this a positive development, and in their assessment of Indian politics in 1950 they expressed happiness that the Chinese Communist invasion of Tibet has

Aroused considerable anger and resentment within the Indian Government. Although a basic change in India's international outlook is not yet apparent, considerable pressure is undoubtedly being placed on Nehru to have him abandon his moral support of communist China. As the threat of Chinese dominated Communism in Southeast Asia increases, prospects for such abandonment will improve, together with the consequent possibilities of Indian cooperation in curbing Communist expansion.<sup>20</sup>

In 1950, unlike his deputy prime minister, Sardar Patel, who was eager to adopt an aggressive stand on Tibet, Nehru was circumspect. His caution was equated with pusillanimity and led to the growth of the perception that Nehru was soft on China. The Indian elite expected Nehru to be unequivocal in his criticism of Chinese actions in Tibet. Minoo Masani felt that Nehru's ambiguity on the China issue aided the domestic communists.<sup>21</sup> According to *Time* magazine, Nehru's lack of enthusiasm for the Tibetan cause was the actual reason for the China-India war. 'Even the Chinese conquest of Tibet in 1951 had rung no alarm bells in New Delhi and therein lay the real beginnings of the present (1962) war'.<sup>22</sup>

In 1954, India signed a trade agreement with China that permitted it to trade with Tibet. This was seen by Nehru's detractors as an act that forfeited India's strategic rights in Tibet and acknowledged China as a sovereign power in Tibet.<sup>23</sup> On 31 March 1955, the Chinese paid a sum of Rs. 316,828.28 to the Indian government as compensation for the 'network of postal, telegraph system, public telephone services and equipment and rest houses inherited by India in Tibet from the British'.<sup>24</sup> The significance of the treaty was that India recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and, in return, the Chinese never questioned the hoisting of the Indian flag in Tawang in 1951, thereby accepting the Indian presence in the land that had traditionally belonged to Tibet. This meant that until 1955, there was no dispute over either Tawang or the Aksai Chin road in the India-China equations.<sup>25</sup>

Suddenly, the issue of the Chinese building a road from Aksai Chin to Tibet became a major security issue in India. On 16 April 1956, there was an uprising in Tibet.<sup>26</sup> It was done by 'an underground movement, carefully

organised and reasonably well-armed', supported by the CIA.<sup>27</sup> 'Between 1957 and 1960, the US spent more than US \$1.7 million annually on Tibet'.<sup>28</sup> MATS flight and the commercial airlines on Taiwan, Civil Air Transport (CAT) controlled by the CIA was used to aid rebel forces in Tibet.<sup>29</sup> 'Down to 1961 CAT undertook more than 200 overflights of mainland China and Tibet'.<sup>30</sup>

According to a US embassy cable of November 1960, India was not completely averse to making aid available to Tibetans. It was certainly not morality that worried India. Its concern was that if the US military plane supplying material to Tibetan rebels crashed on Indian territory, it would be a diplomatic disaster and raise serious questions about the credibility of journalists and parliamentarians engaged in severe criticism of Chinese Communists. India also wanted to avoid a situation that could turn public opinion against the United States.

Besides the use of Indian airspace, as well as maintenance bases for US military flights, Kalimpong became the 'command centre of the Tibetan revolt'.<sup>31</sup> Nehru described Kalimpong as a 'den of spies', which was 'home to Tibetan aristocrats, European Tibetophiles, wealthy Khampa traders, British missionaries, Mongolian Buddhists, Indian intelligence officers, CIA agents posing as tourists, Bhutanese royalty, Burmese royalty, and more'.<sup>32</sup>

On 12 April 1959, in a highly secret CIA-aided operation, Indian officials received the Dalai Lama at Bomdila at an altitude of 10,000 feet.<sup>33</sup> This was accompanied by the internationalization of human rights abuses in Tibet. India's direct involvement in Tibet led to tensions on the India-China border. This single move completely disturbed India-China relations. India was seen to be in complete alignment with America to destabilize China. However, within India the mood was more upbeat with regard to the grant of asylum to the Dalai Lama, who was seen as a victim of Mao's aggressive policies. Added to it was a sense of guilt for being late in helping the Tibetan cause. Commenting on the after-effects of the Dalai Lama's flight to India, Noel Baber wrote,

For the first time in my many visits to India I found on this occasion a deep stirring of conscience amongst intelligent Indians, combined with a genuine embarrassment at the role played by their government; and

this feeling may well awaken India to a more serious sense of responsibility to the free world.<sup>34</sup>

Some Chinese newspapers reported that ‘rebellion was engineered by the imperialists, the Chiang Kai-shek bands and foreign reactionaries; the commanding centre of the rebellion was in Kalimpong’.<sup>35</sup> However, China refrained from blaming India and only reiterated the importance of five principles of peaceful co-existence enshrined in the China-India agreement of 29 April 1954.<sup>36</sup> The other significant aspect was that none of the Chinese official communiques or media reports blamed Dalai Lama for what happened in Lhasa. In fact, he was shown to be held ‘under duress by the reactionary clique’. It is significant that even after the arrival of the Dalai Lama, the Chinese did not blame Nehru, the Indian state or its people; their wrath was directed against Indira Gandhi, Vijayalakshmi Pandit, JPN, Asoka Mehta and other Indian political leaders, a few pro-American ‘reactionary officials’ in the Indian government.<sup>37</sup> The Chinese probably wanted to keep a window of opportunity open for negotiations. The Chinese supported the statements and actions of the Communist Party of India that denounced attempts to endanger Sino-Indian relations. This was to show that masses in India cherished the friendship between the two countries, and it was only a small section of pro-American Indians who were involved in anti-China activities.

A film called *Putting Down the Rebellion in Tibet* was released in the month of May 1959. References to India in the film included the mention of a women’s procession to the Indian consulate-general at Lhasa with a picture of the consulate-general, still pictures of processions in front of the Chinese embassy in Delhi and a cartoon in *Tibet Mirror* (published in Kalimpong) depicting a Chinese soldier kneeling before Tibetan soldiers.<sup>38</sup>

Pakistani support to America on the issue of Tibet was also condemned in the Chinese media, and Pakistan President Ayub Khan’s proposal to form a joint Indo-Pak military alliance was seen as an attempt to follow US diktats to sow seeds of discord between India and China. The rejection of the Pakistani proposal by India was praised.<sup>39</sup>

A special session of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress brought out that the tensions on the Sino-Indian border were ‘created by some Indians who with ulterior motives had made use of some



boundary disputes to launch a new anti-China campaign, carried out vicious attacks on China and spread the slander that China had committed aggression against India'.<sup>40</sup> A *People's Daily* editorial of 16 September, titled "Our Expectations", blamed the Indian right-wing for anti-Chinese agitation in India and regretted that 'Prime Minister Nehru whom we respect, instead of maintaining a wise attitude due to him has been involved in this whirlpool'.<sup>41</sup>

While the Chinese media was engaged in blaming Americans for the sad turn in India-China relations, the Western media was providing the Indians with material to build a case for war with China. Two years before the India-China war, William Stevenson wrote twelve articles under the banner "World's Most Rugged Frontier" published in the *Globe and Mail* of Canada. The Indian embassy in the USA sent the articles to New Delhi. The logic and the rhetoric used in Stevenson's articles, for example, 'Has India the Moral fibre to resist border Intrusions' and 'The most powerful political fifth-column that China has inside India is the West Bengal Communist party' are some of the phrases that were commonly used by the authors and commentators engaged in ratcheting up the India-China differences.<sup>42</sup>

## **Tibet lobby in India**

The support for flight of the Dalai Lama to India was the result of many years of hard lobbying in India for the Tibetan cause. Immediately in 1950–51, after the Chinese state entered Tibet to consolidate its hold, a pro-Tibet lobby emerged in India. In 1952, the Society for Defence of Freedom in Asia (SDFA) was inaugurated.<sup>43</sup> The organization went on to create a Tibet Committee to fight for the Tibetan cause. N.G. Ranga headed the committee and was supported by others like Acharya Kriplani; the two right-wing liberals became the most vocal votaries of the Tibetan cause.

The common thread running through the lobby was their allegiance to America and anti-communism. According to K.M. Panikkar, America and Apa Pant (India's political officer in Sikkim 1955–61), were the twin factors responsible for the sudden deterioration in Sino-Indian relations in the mid-1950s.<sup>44</sup> Apa Pant convinced many 'senior Indian political leaders like JPN, G B Pant and the ex-president Rajendra Prasad to take up the

Tibetan cause as their own'.<sup>45</sup> Purshottam Das Trikamdas, an old associate of Apa Pant, persuaded the international commission of jurists to publish two reports on Tibet in 1959 and 1960 with the aim of establishing the fact that Tibet enjoyed *de facto* sovereignty between 1912 and 1951.

JPN, Ram Manohar Lohia, Minoo Masani and other leaders belonging to the Congress Socialist Party along with the leaders of *Jan Sangha* were in the forefront leading a campaign against China on the issue of Tibet's freedom. The socialist group along with other right-wing politicians was chiefly responsible for shaping public opinion in India both on China and Tibet. This powerful pro-America lobby consisting of members from all major political parties, barring the Communist Party of India (CPI), used the Tibet card to build a negative image of China and pushed the Indian establishment on an escalatory warpath. The lobby closely collaborated with their counterparts in America.

JPN was associated with 'The Committee of One Million: Against the Admission of China to the United Nations'.<sup>46</sup> Some of the members of this New York-based organization that had come up in 1953 were his old mates Jay Lovestone and Henry R. Luce.<sup>47</sup> JPN presided over an Afro-Asian Convention on Tibet held at Calcutta on 30 and 31 May 1959 and emphasized its 'non-official' character.<sup>48</sup> In his address, JPN attempted to make careful distinction between the Tibetan cause and India-China border problems and said, 'let no one suppose that it is to avenge any wrong done to India that we have taken up the question of Tibet'.<sup>49</sup>

After the Calcutta convention, JPN set up an Afro-Asian Committee to work for the cause of Tibet. A bureau was set up, and its representatives Samar Guha and H.R. Pardiwala went to countries of Southeast Asia, West Asia and Africa to seek the cooperation of opinion makers and leaders in those countries. Besides mobilizing world opinion for the Tibetan cause, the Afro-Asian Committee on Tibet also planned 'to arrange for the appointment of an International Commission of neutral countries with a view to report on the alleged violation of human rights including the destruction of monasteries in Tibet'.<sup>50</sup>

JPN was directly engaged in helping the Dalai Lama and Tibetan refugees settle down in India. He was a member of the New York-based Tibetan Foundation that funded the rehabilitation of Tibetans in India and building infrastructure for them. Incidentally, Roger Baldwin and Pearl S.

Buck, the votaries of India's freedom in America in the 1940s, were also members of the Tibetan Foundation.<sup>51</sup> J.J. Singh, the erstwhile president of the Indian League of America, and intellectuals like Frank Moraes were also supportive of the Tibet cause.

JPN was elected president of the Indian version of the Congress for Cultural Freedom; a CIA-funded organization engaged in anti-communist activities. He was also directly involved with the US-sponsored Peace Corps activities in India and facilitated the movement of young American participants in villages in Bihar with the help of his *Sarvodaya* workers.<sup>52</sup>

JPN was the chair of the Dalai Lama Charitable Trust based in Calcutta. One of his jobs was to liaise with the chief ministers and ministers in the state governments to facilitate the granting of land and loans to the Dalai Lama Trust. For example, JPN requested the chief minister of Madhya Pradesh, Govind Narayan Singh, to help a Tibetan refugee set up an industrial unit, G.S. Mandidip Paper Mills Ltd at Sihora, and to provide the unit with a loan of Rs. 2 million from the Madhya Pradesh *Audyogic Vikas Nigam*.<sup>53</sup>

JPN was deeply involved in the management of Tibetan businesses in India. In one of his letters to S.T. Rinchen of the Dalai Lama Charitable Trust, he expressed his worries about the management of Gayday iron and steel company and suggested drastic reduction of staff. He also recommended that the company and Mr Tsarong shift their head offices to Koderma, in the state of Jharkhand.<sup>54</sup>

## Ike in India

After the Dalai Lama's arrival in India, the next big moment of 1959 was President Dwight D. Eisenhower's visit, an important leg of Eisenhower's famous 22,000-mile round-the-world tour. In Delhi, Eisenhower received a thunderous welcome. 'A 21-gun salute boomed across the be-flagged airport and thousands cheered as the president emerged from the aircraft... . The 12-mile drive from the airport to the *Rashtrapati Bhavan* was something of a triumphal procession'.<sup>55</sup>

The unprecedented reception accorded to Eisenhower changed the US media's opinion of Indian neutrality and its perceived tilt in favour of

communists. According to the Indian embassy's report on the coverage of the visit, the *Spartanburg* (S.C.) *Herald* pointed out that Eisenhower's reception was far more expressive than the reception of Khrushchev in 1955.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, *Time* reported, 'India is the pivot of Ike's trip, the nation perhaps more responsive to the US ideas now than at any time in its 11 years of independence'.<sup>57</sup> The embassy's report quoted an American newspaper that stated:

It is most gratifying that this basic sense of unity between the two peoples has survived the foreign policy conflicts of recent years. Surely premier Nehru and his US baiting minister of defence, Krishna Menon, who has taken so much delight in antagonizing Americans are good enough politicians to interpret accurately the temper of their people.<sup>58</sup>

Besides delivering a public speech at the *Ramlila* grounds in Delhi, the US president also addressed members of both the houses of Parliament. Describing the scene in the Parliament, Edouard Sablier of the Belgian paper, *Le Soir*, reported, 'It was almost a white assembly and white dresses (which created an impression that a party of medical men were meeting)'. Commenting on the reactions of the parliamentarians to the speech, Sablier wrote,

A storm of applause greeted Ike as he came in and his speech was loudly cheered whenever he evoked the common action of USA and India for peace... . Paradoxically enough the assembly, vibrating only when the word "peace" is uttered, has hitherto heard two speakers who were military men: Marshal Tito and President Colonel Nasser. The President General Eisenhower is the third.<sup>59</sup>

In his welcome remarks, Vice President Radhakrishnan said of Eisenhower, 'you are a great General; you know the vanity and foolishness of war to solve the problem'.<sup>60</sup> While peace prevailed in Parliament, the ground realities were very different. *The New Orleans Times-Picayune* of 10 December stated that despite the 'goodwill colour' given to Eisenhower's trip, Mr. Nehru and the president were actually meeting to discuss the

border dispute between communist China and India, and Indo-Pakistan relations.<sup>61</sup>

*The San Francisco Chronicle* explicitly connected President Ike's reception to the Chinese threat and stated,

Neutralist, standoffish India has overnight become warmly pro-western, pro-US in its new and angry concern over the Trans-Himalayan threat of the Chinese. It is at this new juncture, that the President and Prime Minister Nehru enter upon their discussions today of future East-West relationship.<sup>62</sup>

Commenting on Indo-US interactions, *The Spokesman-Review* of 24 November commented that 'Eisenhower's visit needs to be the final convincer that India ought to "play ball" with this country, instead of the reds, a little more than in the recent past'.<sup>63</sup>

*The Minot News* of 25 November was however convinced that Nehru was now willing and ready for action against China. The paper opined that President Eisenhower's goodwill visit to India was likely to become more a 'war strategy session than a social call'. The paper further added,

It is too soon to expect India to give up her cherished neutrality. But Nehru's private memorandum to his top envoys in foreign capitals shows that he has finally come around to the grim belief that armed action may be required to force the Chinese from the position they now occupy on territory India regards as her own.<sup>64</sup>

The 14 December 1959 editorial in the *Guardian*, the influential English daily of Rangoon, deplored Nehru's obduracy in refusing to 'enter into military commitment with the United States to resist China'. The paper commented that *in the eventuality of an attack Nehru will accept the United States military assistance* and justify it by saying that it was necessary to preserve neutrality. In view of Nehru's insistence on peace, the editorial remarked, 'Such an attitude on part of India makes it difficult for the United States to pursue and yet at the same time help protect India from the Chinese aggression'.<sup>65</sup> To overcome this dilemma, the paper suggested that

the US adopt a policy to 'satisfy India's yearning for peace by giving them protection against the Chinese aggression'.<sup>66</sup>

The comments in the paper were indeed profound and prophetic because when pushed against the wall by the Chinese invasion, Nehru did concede and gave a written request to President Kennedy on 19 November 1962, asking for military cover.

The Indo-American military contacts increased after the intensification of rebellion in Tibet. In the first half of June 1957, Krishna Menon during his visit to the United States went to the national cemetery in Arlington to lay a wreath on the tomb of the Unknown Soldier.<sup>67</sup> General Maxwell D. Taylor, Chief of Staff, US Army, visited India from 14 to 17 January 1958. General K.S. Thimayya, Chief of Army Staff, accompanied by his quartermaster general, Lt Gen Daulet Singh, and Brig. B.D. Kapur, chief controller of R&D under the scientific adviser to the Ministry of Defence, visited the USA from 16 to 28 September 1958.<sup>68</sup>

On 9 August 1961, the assistant secretary of state, US Defence Department, along with Chester Bowles and his military attaché, called on the COAS, General V.N. Thappar, who complained against the supply of F-104 supersonic planes with guided missiles to Pakistan.<sup>69</sup> However, during the talks, neither party mentioned arms supply or sale from US to India.<sup>70</sup> The topic was not discussed because it was India's stated position not to beg the US for weapons ostensibly to protect the sanctity of its neutrality.

However, archival records suggest that there was a vast gap between the stated policy and facts on the ground. India had started building up its military after President Eisenhower's visit. In early sixties, the activity in the military wing of the Indian embassy in the United States increased considerably.<sup>71</sup> The indents received from India in the year 1960–61 were more than double the numbers received in the previous years.<sup>72</sup> As many as 94 urgent indents, mostly from the master general of ordinance (MGO) were received by the embassy. The total number of contracts entered by MGO and other departments of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) during the year amounted to \$1,621,974.53. The military attaché also had to deal with increased requests from the research and development establishment of the MoD for the latest items and equipment developed by either civil firms in America or the department of the United States Army.<sup>73</sup>

The air attaché's report for the year 1961 indicated that during the year, the Air Headquarters furnished detailed information on the operational capacities and costs of fourteen different types of aircraft, and four additional Bell 47-G.3 aircraft were purchased for the IAF. The air attaché negotiated for the acquisition of a Jet Pak installation for the C119 aircraft. The contract for one trial unit was signed with M/s Steward Davis Inc. in July 1961. During the period, a technical team of the Indian Air Force also visited various USAF bases to report on operation and servicing of the Curtis Wright R.3550 engines installed on the C119 aircraft, in view of the increased number of cases of failure of these engines in India.<sup>74</sup>

By 1960s, the two countries came closer, and it was felt that in the post-Dulles era, the general direction of policy between India and the United States was conflict-free. During Eisenhower's second term, US assistance grew substantially, surging from \$400 million in 1957 to a record \$822 million in 1960.<sup>75</sup> President John F. Kennedy in his 30 January 1961 state of the union address praised 'the soaring idealism of Nehru'. On 22 February 1961, B.K. Nehru, India's commission general for economic affairs in Washington, wrote to L.K. Jha, Economic Secretary, Ministry of Finance, regarding a two-hour-long tête-à-tête with Averell Harriman. B.K. Nehru wrote that according to Harriman,

India was the greatest ally of the United States – much more so than its vaunted military allies of SEATO – for simple reason that under the leadership of Mr. Nehru, the values of India were the same as the values of the United States.<sup>76</sup>

On 5 May 1961, Narayan Das and Radha Raman, members of Parliament, asked questions regarding talks between the prime minister and Harriman. Raman wanted to know if Harriman gave his opinion on Kennedy administration's bold plan for the neutralization of Asia and the Indian government's reactions to such a plan. Nehru's reply to the questions stated that the 'Government was not aware of any such plan'.<sup>77</sup> Hints about Kennedy's plans for Asia were discussed in an article titled "US Policy towards China which is roaming in a Blind Alley" published in *The Peking Daily*. The article referred to President Kennedy's undelivered speech related to using countries on the 'periphery of the Communist world' and

‘infusing 3.5 million allied troops along the Communist frontier at one-tenth the cost of maintaining a comparable number of American soldiers’.<sup>78</sup>

By the early 1960s, the movement of Indian political, business and bureaucratic elite to the USA increased considerably. On 7 June 1961, complaining against the trend, M.C. Chagla, Indian ambassador to the US, wrote to Nehru,

I have been very worried about the way delegations and important dignitaries from India visit this country. Very often matters which could easily be attended to by the mission here are taken up by persons coming all the way from India. The State Department always seems surprised that we should use our big guns to fire at such small targets. After all you have a high powered mission here whose duty is to execute the policy laid down by the Government of India. I have also found out that itineraries are decided with the help of the American embassy in Delhi and the only intimation we get is from the State Department. There is a growing tendency to bypass the Embassy. I also frankly do not like Indians occupying high positions coming to this country on various grants like the Leadership Grant, Ford Foundation etc. It seems to me as if we are really accepting charity from this country, however politely the transactions may be described. I have found ministers, deputy ministers and others accepting invitations from this country and coming here at the expense of the US government.<sup>79</sup>

Almost one year before the 1962 war broke out; Lt General B.M. (Bijji) Kaul (then chief of the general staff), T.N. (Tikki) Kaul (Indian high commissioner at London) and B.K. Nehru (India’s ambassador to the USA) met in London. At the luncheon meeting, Bijji stated ‘we were soon to come into military conflict with the Chinese’, due to Defence Minister Krishna Menon’s ‘forward policy’, and he requested B.K. Nehru to ‘please, please arrange to get American military aid so that we can defend ourselves’.<sup>80</sup> B.K. Nehru claims to have predicted the entire course of war. On reaching Washington, B.K. Nehru met George McGhee at the Chevy Chase club and narrated the conversation that he had had with Bijji and Tikki at London and told him that ‘when, as seemed likely, the conflict



started and we were forced to retreat, we would soon run to the United States for immediate military help'.<sup>81</sup> These conversations show that India was expecting a war with China and was preparing for it despite the continuous fall in its foreign exchange reserves.<sup>82</sup>

On 8 June 1962, India almost admitted that it was on the verge of suspending the minimum legal currency cover requirements. Finance Minister Morarji Desai announced the government's intent to delay and if possible avoid imposing any substantial austerity measures to curb foreign exchange outflow from the country. However, when the situation deteriorated further he relented and said:

That there came a point in the history of every nation when it must demonstrate that it is prepared to take whatever action ... may be necessary to pursue the paramount objectives so vital to its sense of dignity and purpose.<sup>83</sup>

It is in the year of such financial stress that India refused to lower tensions on borders with China. In view of the increasing American influence in India, the Chinese were keen to settle the boundary alignments to prevent border clashes. India, however, refused to engage with the Chinese at the negotiating table, stating that 'the Sino-Indian borders being already settled on the alignments claimed by India, through blind historical process'.<sup>84</sup>

## **Conclusion**

'The Eisenhower administration sought to drive a wedge between China and its Soviet ally by a policy of calculated toughness towards the former so as to increase pressure upon the alliance beyond breaking point'.<sup>85</sup> Both Taiwan and Tibet were identified as the painful points, that if adequately pressed could lead China to obey America. India's geographic proximity to Tibet and the unsettled India-China border were the twin factors that made it a key player in the American strategy on Tibet. They estimated that internal troubles in China and the removal of Soviet cover would lead Mao to capitulate. If Russia was adding to the pressure by withdrawing aid, India doubled it by launching a "forward policy" in Ladakh and NEFA in 1960.

Both the power blocs wanted to pressurize China to alter its behaviour in their favour and join their respective bloc as a junior partner.

From 1959, the case for war with China was openly discussed in the media. Public opinion was built in India against China, and war became inevitable. America made sure that Nehru gave a written request for military help, primarily to teach him a lesson on the futility of the non-alignment policy.

The Tibet Lobby's critique of China's policies and practices in Tibet is based on the right of Tibetans to 'self-determination'. However, it cannot be ignored that projecting China as a colonizer of Tibet has historically helped both Britain as well as America achieve their geopolitical aims. The impact of the 'free Tibet' movement on Indian domestic politics has been significant. After the flight of the Dalai Lama, the next euphoric moment for the Indian elite came when US President Eisenhower landed in New Delhi in December 1959. The visit assured them that America was with them in halting the march of left-wingers both in and out of Congress.

Tibetan freedom was the glue that bound Indian liberals and conservatives into a single anti-communist entity that could differ on any issue barring China. The Tibet card was used in India to 'other' China almost in the same manner as their Pakistani counterparts used the Kashmir card to 'other' India. The issue of Chinese irredentism became the defining point of Indian patriotism that was used to render communists as pariahs of Indian politics. The growth of anti-China sentiments was a victory for the forces that desired Indian foreign policy's alignment to America. However, the successful flight of the Dalai Lama to India was just one battle won by the anti-communists. The next chapter discusses how the final outcome of the 1962 war helped America and the Indian elite achieve the Sino-Soviet split and create a wedge in the communist movement in India.

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- 48 JNPP/Part III/SF: 23, NMML. The conference received messages from Dato Abdul Razak Bin Hussain, prime minister (PM) of Malaya; Field Marshal Srisdi Dhanarajata, PM of Thailand and president AFPFL; Burma, U Ba Swe; Japan's People Council on Tibetan problem; Nepal Congress; Buddhist General Association Vietnam; Pakistan, Federation of Labour; Frances Beaufort-Palmer, Tibet Society, London; Gyalo Thondup, brother of the Dalai Lama; Rukmani Arundale, member parliament (MP); H.N. Kunzru, MP; Atul Chandra Gupta; VKRV Rao Vice Chancellor (VC), Delhi University; K.M. Munshi; Master Tara Singh; Farid Ansari; Justice G.B. Bakdas VC Nagpur University; S.N. Dwivedi MP; A.C. Joshi, VC, Punjab University; Karnath, Bangalore; Maganbhai P. Desai, VC, Gujarat University
- 49 Ibid. See presidential address of Jayaprakash Narayan at the Afro-Asian Convention of Tibet and Against Colonialism in Asia and Africa.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid. Winthrop R. Munyan, Secretary of the Foundation, writes to JP, 3 June 1978.
- 52 Prasad Achyutanand. *An Unacknowledged Aeronaut*, Nehru Memorial Museum Library (NMML):2–3
- 53 JNPP/ Part III/SF:33. JP's Letter to Govind Narayan Singh chief minister, Madhya Pradesh January 20, 1969.
- 54 Ibid. JPN's letter to S.T. Rinchen, 5 February 1969. Gayday was the only factory of cast iron spun pipe in the state of Bihar. The Trust hoped to get preferential treatment for award of contracts from Bihar government. They also envisaged supplying pipes to the Bokaro steel plant and the Nepal government.
- 55 Boobli George Varghese. "Delhi Too Likes Ike," *Times of India*, December 9, 1959
- 56 F/52(45)/AMS/1959/ Part I/MEA/NAI: 77. Compilation of press reports on US president's visit by the External Publicity Division of MEA. Report by Edouard Sablier, from New Delhi, "Ike before Indian parliament or end of anti-Americanism", 15 December 1959.
- 57 Ibid: 79
- 58 Ibid: 75–76. *Time*, 3 December 1959
- 59 Ibid: 104–106
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid: 85
- 62 Ibid: 78
- 63 Ibid: 82
- 64 Ibid: 83
- 65 Ibid: 102
- 66 Ibid: 102–103
- 67 F/48(1)/AMS/1957/MEA/NAI: 214. FPR, 1–15 June 1957.

- 68 F/52(16)/AMS/1958/MEA/NAI. General K.S. Thimayya fell ill and was admitted to Walter Reed hospital in Washington.
- 69 F/73(83)/AMS/1961/MEA/NAI
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Brigadier Harbhajan Singh took over as military attaché on 27 July 1961. He also officiated as naval attaché. Captain J. Cursethji joined as naval attaché on 14 December 1961. Group Captain I.H. Latif replaced Group Captain H.S Ratnagar as air attaché on 7 February 1961.
- 72 F/3 (28)/H1/1962 – I/MEA/NAI: 8. While the total number of letters and indents handled in 1960 were 8126 and 110, in 1961 the number increased to 8495 and 257, respectively. The number of letters issued in 1960 was 12,039; it was 12,507 in 1961. The air attaché's annual report of 1961 also indicated an increase in indents. He reported that there was a special increase in the air HQ requirements of A.O.G. spares. The total number of such indents in 1961 rose to 1024 as against 136 in 1959 and 331 (plus an additional demand of 102 items on special emergency case) in 1960. In addition, the air attaché's office procured indents for 110 items of ground equipment and another special indent of 830 items.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Dennis Kux. *Estranged Democracies: India and United States – 1941–1991*, (New Delhi, 1993):150
- 76 F 73(37)/AMS/1961/MEA/NAI
- 77 F/74(12)/AMS/1961/MEA/NAI. Lok Sabha Starred question no. 9314, 5 May 5 1961.
- 78 Atul Bhardwaj. "Cold War 2.0 – Sino-US Strife and India," *The Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 1, August 22, (2015):10
- 79 F/73(59)/AMS/1961/MEA/NAI. M.C. Chagla to Nehru June 7, 1961
- 80 Braj Kumar Nehru. *Nice Guys Finish Second*, (New Delhi, 1997):385
- 81 Ibid: 386.
- 82 "Dealing with Scarcity 1957–63," *RBI History*, vol. II (1951–1967):653 [www.rbi.org.in/scripts/RHvol-2.aspx](http://www.rbi.org.in/scripts/RHvol-2.aspx) (Accessed on 18 June 2013)
- 83 FRUS/1955–1957/volume VIII/ South Asia, Document 154. Telegram from the embassy in India to the Department of State, New Delhi, November 25, 1955. <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v08/d154> (Accessed on 18 September 2013)
- 84 Neville Maxwell. "Henderson Brooks Report: An Introduction," *Economic & Political Weekly*, vol. 36, April 7, 2001
- 85 Yahuda. *The International Politics of the Asia-Pacific*:43

## 7 1962 war and the Sino-Soviet split

India's foreign policy was moored to liberal internationalism after the world war. When Churchill spoke to the Americans about 'a special relationship between the British Commonwealth and Empire and the United States of America',<sup>1</sup> he included in his coalition the English-speaking Indian elite to whom the British handed over power. Churchill pronounced the commencement of the Cold War through his 'iron curtain' speech in May 1946, and a few months later, Nehru announced his policy of not aligning with any military bloc. This is significant because while Churchill was burning bridges with the communist world, he was simultaneously placing planks to reach out to Stalin. India was one such plank that was to assist the Anglo-Americans in negotiating the bi-polar world.

India began its external affairs journey as part of the Commonwealth, and many of its post-war policies were in conformity with the goals of the organization's agenda. In 1946, 'India became the first country to impose economic sanctions on South Africa – a policy Nehru's government endorsed'.<sup>2</sup> Vijayalakshmi Pandit was the leader of the Indian delegation that led the drive to censure South Africa in the General Assembly of the United Nations.<sup>3</sup> This move against the South African regime was an open defiance of the West. This enabled Nehru to establish his independent credentials vis-à-vis the Western powers. It also endeared him to black Africans for speaking out against the oppressive white regime. Closer scrutiny reveals that Nehru's positioning worked to the advantage of the Anglo-Americans.

At this time, Britain was interested in exiting Africa gracefully. The US desired 'to succeed Great Britain as ruler of the Colored World in Asia and Africa'.<sup>4</sup> However, it lacked credibility to champion the African cause. The

violence and hypocrisy of whites against African Americans had the potential to disrupt the march of the 'American Century'. America's poor record of racial discrimination dented the fight against colonialism and communism. This problem was highlighted in 1944 by Gunnar Myrdal in *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*.

India, with its clean image and past history of raising her voice against racial discrimination in America, was best suited to manage decolonization on behalf of the Anglo-Americans and prevent the communists from 'capturing the allegiance of the developing countries'.<sup>5</sup> The Indian political leadership's long association with the African American struggle for civil and human rights made them the right candidates to push the larger concerns of the colonized nations of Africa. Walter White, the executive director of the NAACP, used 'Indian opposition to American racism to pressure American politicians, afraid of losing India to Japan, to grant equal rights to African Americans'.<sup>6</sup> Post war, the Indian leaders reduced their criticism of racism inside America to make room for black internationalism and 'colored cosmopolitanism'.<sup>7</sup> India was a crucial link in the 'global double victory' campaign that linked victory against colonialism to the annihilation of racial discrimination within America.<sup>8</sup>

A little before independence, India gathered the leaders of all Asian nations at Red Fort to form an anti-colonial and anti-racism front. For Nehru, Asian consolidation was a way to achieve 'one world' as enunciated by Wendell Willkie.<sup>9</sup> The first Asian relations conference was followed by the second Asian conference at New Delhi in 1949. Here, a new slogan 'Asia for Asians' was coined to replace the Japanese slogan 'Asia for Asiatics' that died with Japanese defeat. The conference made a pitch for ending Dutch rule in Indonesia. One media commentary on the conference suggested that 'if we are to put the West in its proper place, doesn't this "we" include the people of the Dark Continent as well? What about the riots in South Africa?'<sup>10</sup>

## **India, a credible neutral in Korean crisis**

The Korean crisis provided India the opportunity to offer its services as a credible mediator. India's response to the Korean problem is seen in two



distinct phases – before and after the outbreak of hostilities in Korea. In the first phase, India supported the US-sponsored UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolutions in 1947 and 1948 that legitimized UN involvement in Korea, created the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) and recognized South Korea as the only legal entity in the peninsula. India's diplomat, K.P.S. Menon, was the chair of the commission and Dr Anup Singh was India's representative at UNTCOK. When UNTCOK was replaced by the new UN commission, Singh was again appointed as India's representative. C. Kondapi, assistant secretary at the Indian Council of World Affairs, was the second Indian delegate in the Korean Commission. Singh's dispatches from South Korea played an important role in shaping the Indian government's understanding of the imbroglio.

Initially, India did not play the role of a mediator between the two superpowers but gave full support to the US to bolster the role of the United Nations in international conflict management. This was the time when Chiang Kai-shek ruled China and was part of the UN decision-making process and the Soviet Union stood isolated. The Soviets did not recognize UNTCOK and considered it to be in violation of their December 1945 agreement with the United States, according to which the Korean issue was to be settled between the great powers concerned.<sup>11</sup>

A fresh phase in the Korean conflict began a few months after the communist victory in mainland China. The Soviets gained an ally in the region. B.N. Rau, India's representative at the UN, voted in favour of the Security Council (SC) resolution that declared North Korea as the aggressor for its 25 June 1950 military action. The resolution was passed by the UN without China and USSR being a part of the deliberations.<sup>12</sup> India abstained from the 27 June 1950 UN resolution that called for collective action against North Korea. However, Nehru later notified the UN of the Indian government's acceptance of the second resolution.<sup>13</sup> Nehru took the position that North Korea was the aggressor. Speaking to the parliament on 6 December 1950, Nehru said, 'the basic fact that aggression had taken place of South Korea by North Korea seemed to us to be patent and we supported it'.<sup>14</sup>

Another important development of 27 June 1950 that changed the course of the Korean conflict was President's Truman's order that virtually turned



Formosa (Taiwan) into an American protectorate.<sup>15</sup> The introduction of Taiwan into the equation brought China into direct conflict with the USA. It was no longer only protecting Russian interests in Korea but its own territorial integrity. This heightened the tension and the prospects of another big war in the region. In July 1950, Nehru appealed to Stalin to end the USSR boycott of the United Nations and simultaneously urged Dean Acheson to admit China into the UN.<sup>16</sup> These two letters are cited as proof of Nehru's neutralism, overlooking his initial wholehearted support to America in declaring North Korea as the aggressor.

Even before America could react, the Russians let Nehru's suggestion appear in their media. America, which was vehemently opposed to communist China's entry into the UN, did not appreciate the Indian proposals. This failed experience at mediation made Nehru aware of the limitations of 'peace diplomacy' and the fact that India's 'part in affecting world affairs is very, very little'.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the two letters portrayed Nehru as neutral in the conflict. As the Chinese involvement in the Korean conflict deepened, the possibilities for India to play multiple roles as 'the interlocutor, the mediator and later the adjudicator (at the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission)'<sup>18</sup> increased. However, America was not interested in India as an interlocutor between the two superpowers. It was more keen that Nehru and his team consisting of K.M. Panikkar in Beijing and B.N. Rau in New York act as a *via media* between China and the West. America wanted to use Panikkar's rapport with China to convey its concerns to Beijing regarding its interventions in Korea and Taiwan. Dean Acheson wrote to Nehru at the end of July 1950 and also on 17 September 1950 communicating American concerns to Beijing.<sup>19</sup>

Krishna Menon wanted Nehru to take his role as a mediator to the next level by personally visiting China before proceeding for the meeting of the Commonwealth prime ministers at London in the first week of December. Menon felt that Nehru's peace mission to Beijing 'would create an impression on public opinion in the US'.<sup>20</sup>

Nehru seriously considered Menon's suggestion. However, practical difficulties prevented him from making an unscheduled visit to Beijing. Another reason for Nehru's disinclination to visit China was a lack of confidence in his ability to convince the United States.<sup>21</sup>

China wanted discussions on American actions in Taiwan to be part of the ceasefire negotiations. America was palpably opposed to discussing Taiwan. Nehru did not want the goodwill that New Delhi enjoyed with Beijing to vanish by openly siding with America. Therefore, he supported the Chinese idea of clubbing Taiwan with the Korean issue and pressed for its acceptance by the United States. As far as the admission of China to the UN was concerned, Nehru did not want this to be made a precondition by Beijing for negotiations on Korea.<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, B.N. Rau, India's representative at Lake Success, mobilized representatives of thirteen Asian countries to sign a proposal that pressed China for ceasefire and not to cross the 38th parallel. The 'thirteen-power appeal' was signed by Afghanistan, Burma, Egypt, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen on 5 December 1950.<sup>23</sup> India did not send combat units to Korea, but it did send the Parachute Field Ambulance Regiment to assist the allies.

B.N. Rau and Anup Singh played key roles during the Korean conflict. Both were instrumental in persuading the Indian government to take a partisan stand that favoured the United States.<sup>24</sup> The Harvard-educated Singh, a prominent leader of the India Lobby of America, was a resident of the United States. Post independence, he was appointed as officer on special duty in the MEA.

B.N. Rau was the Indian representative to the UN and the first Indian delegate on the SC. He was the chair of the UNSC when crucial questions on Korea were discussed. Rau's niece, Santha Ram Rau, was married to Faubion Bowers, who was aide-de-camp to General Douglas MacArthur.<sup>25</sup> Santha was the 'first diplomatic daughter' to study on a scholarship at Wellesley College for four years in early 1940s. During vacations, she worked for the Office of War Information (OWI), a crucial arm of the US intelligence network.<sup>26</sup> At Wellesley, she wrote her first book, *Home to India*, which was published by Harper.

Santha's father, Sir Benegal Rau, was India's ambassador to Tokyo in 1947, where she first met Bowers.<sup>27</sup> After Tokyo, Benegal Rau was posted as India's ambassador to Washington and in 1949 returned to India to take over as the fourth governor of the Reserve Bank of India. These networks certainly helped the USA garner crucial Indian support at the United Nations.

On 27 July 1953, after the Armistice, India provided a custodian force and became the chair of the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC). After the dissolution of NNRC, the Indian custodial force came back in February 1954 accompanied by eighty-eight former prisoners – seventy-four North Korean, two South Korean and twelve Chinese – who wished to settle in some neutral country. Out of the total of eighty-eight ex-prisoners, fifty-five went to Brazil, two to China, six to North Korea and fourteen to Argentina. All of the remaining eleven except one, a mentally challenged prisoner, came to India and were assisted in settling down. J.K. Choel, who decided to settle down in India, was helped with a loan of Rs. 10,000 to start a poultry and piggery farm in the outskirts of Delhi. He not only started the business but also employed three other ex-prisoners from Korea.<sup>28</sup>

### *India not alone in recognizing China*

Closely associated with the Korean War was the issue of the granting of international legitimacy to communist rule in China. Nehru's detractors often project him to be the sole world leader interested in diplomatic recognition of People's Republic of China (PRC) in the UN. America was opposed to granting recognition to China. Britain, because of its commercial interests in China, was keen on recognizing it and had mobilized other Commonwealth countries to do the same. Nehru believed that a country as large as China could not be kept outside the global system, and this position was in tune with the UK's approach. However, India wanted its decision to look independent and not a diktat from Britain.

Commenting on the right timing to announce the grant of recognition, Nehru wrote,

Our decision will be our own, though of course we shall consult others. For us to take any action in the wake of (Commonwealth) Foreign Ministers' Conference, apart from the delay involved, would also mean that we could not act independently. This might well affect our position in China.<sup>29</sup>

The net outcome was that India recognized the PRC on 1 January 1949 and Britain recognized it on 6 January. Nehru's policy on China came in for sharp criticism from both America and the anti-communists in India. The Indian socialist leader, Ram Manohar Lohia, condemned Nehru's policy on 'seating Red China in the United Nations at a time when Chinese intervention in Korea had hopelessly entangled this question in an Atlantic-Soviet Conflict'. Answering Tom Stead, member of the US Congress from Oklahoma, Lohia said that Nehru was 'basically a British Satellite, and would eventually join the Atlantic Camp via its British sub-section but would do so only after having irritated and damaged the Americans'.<sup>30</sup>

While India's relations with China plummeted in late 1950s, Britain continued to court China. In July 1959, Sir David Eccles stated in the House of Commons that British exports to China more than doubled in 1958. The total exports during 1958 were valued at £27 million as compared to £12 million in 1957. Imports from China to Britain were valued at £19 million in 1958 against £14 million in 1957.<sup>31</sup> The Labour Party produced a pamphlet in its "Looking Ahead" series entitled "China and the West". On 8 February 1961, speaking in the House of Lords, Lord Douglas Home said that the facts of international life demanded communist China be seated in the UN because without China the disarmament negotiations were incomplete.<sup>32</sup>

### *Why Nehru did not intervene in Tibet*

Since 1950, another misperception has prevailed regarding Nehru's Tibet policy. It is popularly believed that Nehru, an idealist, failed to save Tibet by taking firm action against the communists. What is often ignored is that Nehru was no peacenik. As interim prime minister, he facilitated arms supplies to Tibet, despite protests by Chiang Kai-shek's government. Nehru decided against a military intervention in Tibet in 1950, simply because barring a few Indian politicians, the Anglo-Americans were far from ready for any concrete action in Tibet. Here again, Nehru's actions were in conformity with the Commonwealth approach to the issue.

In October 1950, the Tibetan Cabinet (Kashag) sent an appeal to the UN secretary-general against the 'unthwarted Chinese ambition to bring weaker nations on its periphery under its active domination'.<sup>33</sup> The delegate of El

Salvador asked for the inclusion of ‘the invasion of Tibet by Foreign Forces’ on the UN General Assembly’s agenda. The UNGA discussed the issue on 24 November 1950. The British wanted the matter to be settled amicably between the parties concerned; their delegate proposed that the UNGA defer the decision on the question of the invasion of Tibet. Jam Saheb of Nawanagar, one of the Indian delegates at the UN, supported Britain’s proposal to postpone the Tibet item *sine die*. Saheb told the UN that the Indian government was anxious to settle the dispute peacefully because it had friendly relations with both its neighbours, China and Tibet. Jam Saheb suggested that China and Tibet were two different entities. He also said the Tibetan autonomy had to be safeguarded while maintaining its historical association with China.<sup>34</sup>

In January 1951, Loy Henderson, the American ambassador in India, wrote to the secretary of state that ‘it would not be easy to prevail upon India to extend further assistance or permit armed shipments through India for Tibet’.<sup>35</sup> With food shortages in the country and Kashmir issue on the boil, Nehru was against opening a military front with China. The Indian Army was also reluctant to plunge into conflict. In a high-level meeting in 1950, General K.M. Cariappa, the chief of Army staff (COAS), said that he ‘could spare no more than a battalion for Tibet’ due to his preoccupations on the Pakistani and internal security fronts. The general further added that the Indian Army was ill-prepared to fight the Chinese on the cold mountainous heights.<sup>36</sup>

The Americans did not trigger the Tibetan front in early 1950s for two reasons. First, they were preoccupied in Korea, and second, they were ill-prepared to launch any military action in Tibet. Gladwyn Jebb, the British permanent representative at the UN, believed that ‘whatever opinion one might hold about Chinese aggression, the reality was that no one could give effective aid to Tibet’.<sup>37</sup> Ironically, these facts are overlooked in discussions that blame Nehru for a flawed Tibet policy.

The rhetoric against Nehru’s China policy was built through unsubstantiated reports. It is commonly perceived that the Indian government sent a letter to the Chinese government on 16 November 1950 in which it recognized China’s complete rights over Tibet, and K.M. Panikkar, India’s ambassador to China, was blamed for wrongly wording that letter. According to Purshottam Trikamdas, a few months before his

death, Panikkar ‘totally repudiated this in a letter to the press and said that he had advised against such a letter being sent to the Chinese government’. Putting the blame for the *untraceable* letter on Nehru, Trikamdas wrote that Nehru in his ‘revolutionary zeal’ thought that ‘handing over Tibet to China was an act which might win for him the friendship of China’.<sup>38</sup>

Lohia was right in respect to Nehru’s proximity to the British. However, his analysis that Nehru was irritating America is incorrect because Nehru as an effective mediator was helping the US. Nehru was aware of the fact that in the communist world, he was increasingly seen as an agent of the West, particularly America.<sup>39</sup> Nehru had two objectives in projecting himself as an autonomous actor and neutral leader – first, to inspire the newly independent nations in Asia and Africa, and second, to win the confidence of China in order to effectively perform his role as a mediator.

Lohia wanted India to come out of the British Commonwealth and asked, ‘What is wrong with America? This ought to be the living example of why it is good to be free of Britain’.<sup>40</sup> Lohia could not visualize the depth of American strategy and its constraints. In early 1950s, America did not want India to abandon Britain, because it was preoccupied elsewhere. America was willing to be patient with India. After the ‘loss of China’, America could not afford to lose India by committing the same mistakes that had caused China to embrace communism.

### [Rejecting the American offer of a Security Council seat](#)

Another China-related incident of the 1950s that has concretized Nehru’s pro-China image is his refusal to accept the American offer to replace China as the permanent member of the UNSC. Nehru’s refusal is either seen in terms of his allegiance to ‘international morality’ or as assertion of ‘Indian agency in its difficult relations with the US’.<sup>41</sup> However, both these approaches omit the role of strategy and tactics in the conduct of international relations.

The US offer was directed more at pressurizing the PRC than appeasing India. Nehru probably foresaw that Dulles was only using this as a pressure tactic to inform China of the enormous loss it would suffer by remaining in the Soviet camp. The offer was a part of the larger American strategy to engineer the Sino-Soviet split by applying pressure on China.

Simultaneously, Dulles made sure that the message reached Mao. Dulles commissioned Marquis Childs, an influential columnist of Washington, 'to build up public opinion along'<sup>42</sup> the lines that India could replace China in the SC.

Nehru was aware that removing China and adding India would have involved altering the basic character of the United Nations. In 1950, the United States wanted to strengthen rather than weaken the UN, one of the strongest pillars of the international liberal order that it had erected.

Furthermore, at that stage it was in the US interest that India emerge as a credible neutral that China could trust and communicate with. This is seen clearly in Nehru's reply to Vijayalakshmi Pandit on the issue where he mentions that replacing China from the SC 'would be a clear affront to China and *it would mean some kind of a break between us and China. I suppose the state department would not like that* [emphasis added], but we have no intention of following that course'.<sup>43</sup>

Nehru must have weighed the seriousness of the offer. As an astute politician, Nehru considered the possibility of America reneging on its offer and the consequences of loss of face in Indian politics. Keeping all the factors in view, Nehru correctly chose to reject the offer. Nehru refused a similar offer from the Soviet Union in 1955. He understood that these offers were not genuine and were made to test his resolve, a fact later revealed by Khrushchev.

The refusal to accept the offers added to Nehru's image and projected him as a credible neutral with an unwavering commitment to a just international order. This added to India's stature as an effective communication channel between the US and the PRC during the Korean crisis.

## **Bandung and beyond**

The 1955 Afro-Asian conference at Bandung, Indonesia, opened on 18 April, the anniversary of the American Revolution. The conference secretariat decided the inaugural date in consultation with the American embassy in Indonesia.<sup>44</sup> The US State Department lacked unanimity on the Afro-Asian conference. Dulles found the purpose of the conference

ambiguous and felt that the US had no direct concern with it.<sup>45</sup> The State Department was more worried that the gathering might discuss America's hydrogen bomb and its use of the Pacific for explosions and experiments. The US was also concerned about Chou En-lai using the platform for building an anti-Western bloc and boosting Beijing's prestige and influence in the region and not so much about Nehru and his impact on the conference.<sup>46</sup>

The American concern was whether the 'pro-West' or 'committed nations' in Asia should attend or skip the conference. Their attendance meant strengthening the position of China and 'neutralist' countries, and non-attendance denied them an opportunity to act as a counterweight against China and India. The boycott of the conference would have made US allies in Asia appear 'as satellites of the Western powers and "un Asian" in their outlook'.<sup>47</sup>

An element of distrust crept into Indo-China relations during the Bandung conference in 1955. The conference began with a tragedy. On 11 April 1955, Air India aircraft *Kashmir Princess* crashed in the Natuna Islands in Indonesian waters. The aircraft carried eleven Chinese passengers and eight crew members – all except six people died in the crash. The Indian crew of the airliner survived.<sup>48</sup> The Chinese accused the Chiang Kai-shek regime in Taiwan and the CIA for plotting the air crash. The plane was slated to carry Chou En-lai, who dropped out of the travel schedule in the *Kashmir Princess* due to intelligence inputs about a possible sabotage.<sup>49</sup> The crash sowed the seeds of distrust between India and China. In 1956, a question came up in the Indian Parliament based on the *New York Times* report about a message from the Chinese prime minister regarding a threat to Prime Minister Nehru's life during his visit to Bombay. The question was not allowed to be discussed in the Parliament.<sup>50</sup>

Post the Bandung conference, an interesting phase began in the history of Indian foreign policy. Nehru's role in world politics as a peacemaker and mediator was appreciated in the West, and according to Sahgal, 'India's relationship with the West prospered'.<sup>51</sup> Nehru's performance convinced Churchill that 'Asia is with us', and Nehru was instrumental in this alignment.<sup>52</sup> Commenting on Nehru's role in Asia, Churchill told Vijayalakshmi Pandit on 22 March 1955 that 'Nehru is the light of Asia ... yes, and a greater light than Buddha'.<sup>53</sup>



In 1956 during the two international crises, Hungary and Suez, that occurred almost at the same time, Nehru consolidated his image as an independent neutral. On Hungary, India partially supported the Soviet Union, and on the Suez Canal's nationalization, Nehru was in tune with the American line that was at variance with the French and British view.<sup>54</sup> Eisenhower appreciated Indian mediation during the Suez crisis that helped in preventing the escalation of military action.<sup>55</sup> India abstained from voting in the UN General Assembly on a motion condemning the Soviet armed intervention in Hungary. The abstention was explained by Nehru in terms of India's opposition to the proposal that elections be held in Hungary under UN supervision. Although Nehru condemned Soviet intervention, he was aware that Soviet support was needed on the Kashmir and Goa issues.<sup>56</sup> In February 1957, the Soviet Union vetoed a Security Council proposal for a plebiscite in Kashmir.<sup>57</sup> While India's speaking up against the British, French and Israeli actions in Suez is rarely discussed, its reluctance to outrightly condemn the Soviet intervention in Hungary is projected as defiance of America and its proximity to the Soviet Union.<sup>58</sup>

Gradually, an 'ideological system' was erected 'around the slender core' of Nehru's policy of non-alignment.<sup>59</sup> Gorwala felt that Nehru's policy had ill-served national interests, and its only achievement was that 'it had made international communism respectable in the world'.<sup>60</sup> Others critical of Nehru challenged the very logic of his foreign policy that sought economic assistance from Western democracies while openly criticizing their policy.<sup>61</sup> Nehru's detractors saw his foreign policy to be increasingly influenced by Marxism-Leninism.<sup>62</sup>

However, associating Nehru's policy with the left ideology had begun much earlier. According to Levi, the entry of Chinese into Tibet led many to challenge Nehru's 'quasi monopoly over foreign policy'.<sup>63</sup> Indian socialist leader Lohia considered that Nehru's policy of neutralism was 'not neutral but as one of alternate service to both camps'.<sup>64</sup> Lohia condemned Nehru's foreign policy by stating that 'one minister of this government clings to the United States, another to Russia and the magician tries to hold the balance by his charm. They call this "non-alignment"'.<sup>65</sup>

### *Non-alignment was not anti-Americanism*

India's answer to Anglo-American hegemony is generally explained in terms of its policy of non-alignment. This included acting as the voice of reason in a bi-polar world and adding the Soviet Union in its list of suppliers of technology and armament, which until the late 1950s was dominated by Britain and America. Until 1956, India had not turned to the Soviet Union for military supplies. In sharp contrast, India signed a reimbursable military aid agreement with the US in 1951 and had received, until the beginning of 1957, military goods and services worth \$38 million from the United States.<sup>66</sup>

Idealism and pragmatism are the two broad classifications used to explain Nehru's non-alignment. Those who see Nehru's foreign policy to be motivated by idealism argue that his defiance of global power politics was guided by Gandhian principles of non-violence.<sup>67</sup> According to Mithi Mukherjee, Nehru's belief in the power of the United Nations was moored to the 'juridical concepts of neutrality and impartiality' acquired from the British monarchy.<sup>68</sup> The early recognition of China and India's refusal to accept the US offer to upstage China from the Security Council are the two most popular examples cited to support the argument that Nehru's foreign policy was dictated by idealism.

The pragmatist school views non-alignment as an offshoot of Nehru's shrewd political mind meant to exploit the inherent contradictions of a bi-polar system.<sup>69</sup> The policy of maintaining equidistance from the two military blocs is seen as a practical way of keeping tabs on the military expenditure of an impoverished nation. Khilnani argues that the policy of non-alignment was inspired by nationalism; it combined pragmatism with realism to provide India the strategic autonomy to protect its national interests.<sup>70</sup>

However, both the schools have serious deficiencies because they rely excessively on Nehru's moralistic statements against international power politics and distrust of the capitalist West to explain non-alignment. Non-alignment needs to be analysed through a wider framework that encompasses the international and domestic agenda of the Indian elite. Non-alignment was not an independent project conceived solely by Nehru; the Anglo-American role in nurturing it needs critical examination.

Non-alignment was not alien to the USA. As Hagerty, a former US diplomat in India in the 1950s said, ‘Those of us who compared Nehru’s speeches with George Washington’s “farewell address” found remarkable parallels between George’s “non-entangling alliances” and Jawaharlal’s “non-alignment”’.<sup>71</sup> The policy of non-alignment signalled equality vis-à-vis America and at the same time was not inimical to US interests. In 1954, Dulles advocated increased economic assistance to India, which was the largest single recipient of American aid outside Korea. Dulles explained as follows:

India’s foreign policy differs from ours. But freedom accepts diversity. The government of India is carrying on a notable experiment of free government. It provides a striking contrast with the neighbouring experiment being conducted in China by the Communist Police State System. We believe that it is important to the United States that India’s Five-year economic plan should succeed, and that to continue to help in this is legitimately in the enlightened self-interest of the United States.<sup>72</sup>

Besides Nehru, America also encouraged the other non-communist neutral leaders: Naseer in Egypt and Sukarno in Indonesia. America also actively supported Joseph B. Tito, another advocate and proponent of the non-aligned movement. In October 1949, the US enabled Yugoslavia to win a seat in the UN Security Council. This support displayed to the world that America was not spearheading a worldwide crusade against communism. Yugoslavia’s example was used to encourage other communist countries to come out of the Russian fold and join the US-led free world.<sup>73</sup>

In mid-1955, G.L. Mehta, India’s ambassador to the United States forwarded an interesting article, titled “It’s Stupid to Convert Nehru from a Neutral to an Enemy” published in the *Courier Journal*, 5 May 1955.<sup>74</sup> It narrated the nuances of American strategy in India and why it willingly tolerated Nehru’s insistence on pursuing an independent foreign policy. It referred to *Time* and *Life* that had been critical of Nehru’s neutralism and his overtures towards China and Soviet Union. The article highlighted the manner in which some sections of American media projected Nehru ‘as the arch fiend of anti-Americanism, even to the exclusion of China’s Chou En-

lai', during the Bandung conference. The article argued that Nehru – the 'potent Asian leader' – who held sway over the minds and hearts of 360 million people was America's best bet against communism.

It gave the example of Vietnam where the lack of a credible leader hampered their plans to contain communism. Nehru's mass appeal, the article argued, offered America a 'glorious opportunity' to communicate their desire of 'universal peace and prosperity to Asians', not only to the Indian population but 'even to all other Asian millions who burn with fresh flame of freedom'. It further highlighted that magnification of Indo-American differences was futile because the real drama – 'the rivalry between the communist China and India for the leadership of Asia', was a high-stake game, in which 'if Nehru falters, Chou En-lai will carry communism to the Indian masses'. Nehru may be an enigma, but one could not 'fly into condemning him as pro-Communist'.<sup>75</sup> Sympathizing with Nehru's idea of neutrality, the article reminded the readers that from the beginning of American national history right down to World War II, USA too was a neutral country.

Supporting Nehru's independent stance on many issues, the article said that Asian leaders who were 'pliant tools to our will' were useless for Americans. The article insisted that America wanted home-grown Asian leaders – 'who will fight for independence from all outside powers, whether it comes from China or Russia or from the United States' – a category in which Nehru was at the top. The article concluded on a cautionary note stating that two things that could turn him from neutral into an active enemy of United States – 'one is an unexpected triumph of Red propaganda, which tries tirelessly to drive America and India apart. The other is the carping at Nehru's motives. The latter weapon of destruction is in our own hands'.<sup>76</sup>

Bowles, the American ambassador to India in the early 1950s, felt that the Nehru government was their best bet because the US was not going to get a better Indian with whom they could 'work a deal with'.<sup>77</sup> In 1956, the US embassy in India reported to their State Department:

The fact is that Nehru and the present governing team in India is perhaps as able as Western-oriented and certainly as committed to democratic norms as any team India is likely to produce some years after Nehru's passing. The team which follows Nehru will emerge from

the generation which was educated during the non-cooperation movement and which never experienced the contact or exposure to Western thought and norms which Nehru's generation did... . This is compelling reason for our accommodating certain of our objections to Nehru's policies and views and more clearly orienting our policy to the strategic purpose of assisting Nehru to achieve a democratic counterpoise to China which would exert magnetic attraction throughout Free Asia.<sup>78</sup>

When Nehru proposed to resign as prime minister in 1957, Dulles advised Nehru not to resign and instead go on a vacation but 'not too far away or for too long a time'. Dulles wrote to Nehru that 'the world was at a turning point ... when the sharpness of conflict between the Soviet Union and the West may be sufficiently moderated to become tolerable'. Besides the thawing of relations between the US and the USSR, Dulles also mentioned that some of the problems that have 'persistently beset Indo-Pakistan relations might be susceptible to solution'. He further urged Nehru that 'it would indeed be a misfortune, perhaps for all of us, if at what may prove to be a critical, formative period, your own influence is not actively present over any really protracted period'. Dulles concluded the letter by saying that 'President Eisenhower continues to hope to be able to visit India before the end of his presidency and while you are Prime Minister'.<sup>79</sup>

### *Courting and countering the non-communist neutrals*

The window of opportunity offered by thaw in the Cold War was used by India to seek economic assistance from the Soviet Union. The loans from the Soviet Union with exceptionally low interest rates could be repaid in local currency and had no royalty or licence fee attached to them. The loans were inclusive of technical assistance for the first stages of development and also training in communist countries.<sup>80</sup> In comparison, the World Bank and German loans came at as high as 6 and 8 per cent respectively.<sup>81</sup>

Since the beginning of the second plan, from 1 April 1956 to 31 July 1957, the total amount of external assistance authorized for public-sector projects was Rs. 3.06 billion, of which the US government contributed Rs.

1.68 billion, including Rs. 1.37 billion under the PL-480 programme.<sup>82</sup> The USSR gave Rs. 630 million for the Bhilai steel plant and promised an additional 600 million for other projects. The International Bank gave a loan of Rs. 460 million mainly for the development of Indian Railways and Rs. 500 million for the private sector.<sup>83</sup> The British gave Rs. 200 million for the Durgapur steel plant.<sup>84</sup> The dependence on American capital became more pronounced after 1957. According to the Chinese media, the US gave \$4,100 million worth of aid to India after it started its anti-China campaign in 1959.<sup>85</sup>

This was the phase when India's growing proximity to the Soviet Union became a pretext to enhance aid to India rather than stopping it. Reminding congressional representatives of the relevance of extending loans to India, the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote,

The Soviet Union, which has turned itself into a modern country in one generation, provides a beautiful day dream for many Indians... . Communist China is on the threshold of a similar blood and sweat transformation. The temptation is strong... . It is as simple as that. The fate of India is in the hands of the free world. A very justified outcry has been raised over the penny-pinching which permitted the Soviets to outstrip us in the race for the intercontinental ballistic missile. Are we going to throw away another race in which stakes – the key to Asia and the freedom of four hundred million people ... are equally high or higher.<sup>86</sup>

As the Third World nationalism charted an alternative course by aspiring to be the 'proverbial clever calves that suck two cows',<sup>87</sup> the Americans responded with a strategy to prevent the non-aligned from suckling the American udder. The strategy was to nudge the neutrals towards the Soviet Union, use their proximity with the Soviet Union to accentuate the Sino-Soviet split and finally dump them after destroying their communist parties.

The US adopted a soft approach towards non-alignment in the last leg of Eisenhower's rule.<sup>88</sup> According to Robert Rakove, Kennedy's presidency was based on the pursuit of a policy of "engagement" by the pragmatists in the administration who considered bonhomie with the 'third world' neutrals

essential for a positive balance of power in the world'.<sup>89</sup> The US discarded the engagement policy after Kennedy's assassination. Lyndon Johnson deliberately alienated the non-aligned world. Kennedy was duly acknowledged as a good friend of the quadrilateral of the neutrals, consisting of India, Egypt, Indonesia and Ghana, whereas Johnson became their foremost *bête noire*.

The strategy to lure Nehru with aid and military supplies was initiated in Eisenhower's second term and built upon by his successor Kennedy. By the end of Eisenhower's tenure, India and America were in a tight embrace. The Indian embassy reported that 'while in the days of Dulles we had good reason to believe that Pakistan was being armed by America partly to "contain neutralist India", we could not in all conscience accept this thesis with Kennedy as the Chief Executive'.<sup>90</sup>

Rakove gives a convincing explanation for why the neutrals loved Kennedy and hated Johnson, but his analysis fails to explain the absence of any reaction on the part of the US when the neutrals reached out to the Soviet Union for help. The American-educated Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah, experienced the nudge as Das Gupta and Shahid posit,

one definitely gains the impression that both the official and non-official agencies in the West were acting in concert to push Nkrumah into the lap of the Soviet Union! He was dubbed a Communist even as he pleaded for co-operation with the West.<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, the non-communist Indonesian leader Sukarno waited for American aid to arrive for two years before seeking Soviet help of \$100 million in 1958.<sup>92</sup> India too experienced a deliberate US attempt to nudge it towards the Soviet Union. This was visible when the US failed to offer overt support to India in the United Nations on the Goa issue, thus leaving India with no choice but to seek Soviet veto to halt the Western resolution in the Security Council denouncing the liberation of Goa from the Portuguese in 1961.<sup>93</sup> All this transpired when Nehru was neck deep supporting the covert US operations in Tibet and preparing public opinion against China.

The evolution of the relationship between the neutrals and the Soviet Union can be better understood by seeing the American approach to the

non-aligned world as one single strand extending from Eisenhower to Johnson. The American strategy consisted of three distinct aspects – woo, use and dump the third world neutrals. Rakove's analysis explains the differences in Kennedy and Johnson's approaches to the neutrals – how Kennedy wooed the neutrals and Johnson dumped them. However, his analysis ignores the benefit that accrued to America by its strategic use of the neutrals.

### *Flirting with the Soviet Union*

The Indo-American distance and discord is attributed to Kashmir and India's budding relationship with the Soviet Union after Stalin's death. The evolution of India-Soviet relations is primarily seen as an offshoot of Nehru's ideological predilection. What is often forgotten is that when Nehru was seeking the Soviets, Nikita Khrushchev was searching for détente with the West and particularly with the United States. Therefore, the argument that Marxism pulled Nehru towards Khrushchev is flawed because it was the changing dynamics in international politics that drew Moscow and New Delhi closer to each other.

Once the de-Stalinization and détente picked up momentum, Nehru jumped the bandwagon to court the Soviet Union. In mid-1955, Nehru visited Moscow, and by the end of the year both Nikolai Bulganin and Khrushchev visited India. Nehru was involved in the 'de-Stalinization' process started by Khrushchev. At the Bandung conference, Nehru denounced the Cominform as being 'non-compatible with non-interference'.<sup>94</sup> Khrushchev created public opinion in the Soviet Union for political reforms, and Nehru helped the cause by publicly denouncing the Cominform in the Soviet Union.<sup>95</sup> Nehru's actions also conformed to the wishes of Western powers that demanded the dismantling of the Cominform. In 1956, Russia formally dissolved the Cominform.<sup>96</sup> This marked the transition of Nehru from being a Sino-US to a Soviet-US mediator. Nehru got closer to the Soviet Union when the latter became willing to view the existence of different types of economy in different countries as no hindrance to the ultimate goal of world communism.

In 1961, a leading American aide, George Ball, undersecretary of state, concurred that India was 'quite capable of absorbing resources from the



Soviet Union with no ill effects'.<sup>97</sup> Henry Kissinger argues in his memoirs, *White House Years*,

Non-alignment enabled India to navigate the international passage with maximum number of options, for that reason we were convinced that India would sooner or later seek a rapprochement with us again if only to keep Moscow from taking it for granted.<sup>98</sup>

The US was not unduly perturbed about the Soviet development aid to 'free countries' like India. The 23 December 1956 draft report of the House Foreign Affairs Committee that called for 'a reduction, rather than an increase, in foreign aid with nonmilitary aid based primarily on loans. It said that countries receiving Soviet aid should also be eligible to receive U.S. aid.'<sup>99</sup> Hans Heymann argued that there was 'an inverse relationship between the extension of Soviet aid and the fortunes of local Communist parties. Egypt, Iraq, India and, most recently, Argentina have, in one way or another, all stiffened their opposition to domestic communism subsequent to the conclusion of aid agreements with the Soviet bloc'.<sup>100</sup>

A 1958 report from the Indian embassy in Washington informed about a policy paper of the US State Department that advised against imitating the methods adopted by the Soviets to disburse aid. The paper suggested limiting the net advantage the Soviets could draw from their aid programs by trying to compound the internal problems which such aid may create for the Soviet rulers. One suggestion was to inform the Chinese about the details of Soviet aid to the 'free world' non-communist countries and instigate the Chinese against the Soviets. The paper commented, 'The Chinese Communist appraisal of Soviet aid for India will probably be about as enthusiastic as the Baghdad Pact nations' reaction to US aid for India'.<sup>101</sup>

The American strategy was to ensure that the newly decolonized neutrals did not join the communist bloc. America aimed to develop a relationship with the neutrals to its advantage but with a minimum use of its own resources. Its strategy was to overstretch Soviet resources with the burden of responsibility for the development and defence needs of countries like India, Egypt and Ghana. Additionally, with respect to India, this strategy had the potential to cause a Sino-Soviet split. Hence, America voiced no objection against India buying weapons from the Soviet Union. It was

confident that the Indian elite were sufficiently fortified against communism. Further, with the ongoing de-Stalinization under Khrushchev, the Indo-Soviet relationship did not pose a threat to America. Lyndon Johnson completed the task of officially distancing America from all the initiators of the non-aligned movement in the mid-1960s. In India's case, the break that began after the 1962 war finally happened when Indira Gandhi was in power.

If America was drawing strategic gains from the Indo-Soviet engagement, Nehru too was not far behind. Nehru's reason to get closer to the Soviet Union went beyond his desire to "suck two udders", to develop an alternative source for economic aid.<sup>102</sup> Since 1948, Nehru desired to inch closer to the Soviet Union to manage the communist threat in domestic politics. As disclosed by Vijayalakshmi Pandit, Nehru 'wanted to cultivate Kremlin in order to neutralise the Communist Party of India, but was unable to achieve this because Soviets [under Stalin] were not ready to play ball and her brother was apprehensive of the Americans'.<sup>103</sup> It was much later that Nehru actually achieved this objective. Nehru's foreign policy vis-à-vis the Soviets enhanced his credibility as a neutral in the international arena and flummoxed the Indian communists at the domestic front, bringing him brilliant political gains. By 1955, he was convinced that the Communist Party of India (CPI) was not making much headway. Addressing the heads of India missions in Europe at Salzburg on 28–30 June 1955, Nehru revealed his strategy to tackle the Indian communists by stating that his foreign policy had

completely confused the Communist Party of India. In view of the appreciation shown by the Soviet leaders of our foreign policy, Indian communists find it difficult to criticise the government. The stature India has gained abroad has given the common man a certain pride in India. CPI, therefore, finds it difficult to undermine the reliance the common man places in government.<sup>104</sup>

He reiterated the same argument in front of the chancellor of Austria, Julius Raab, in Vienna on 27 June 1955. Elaborating further on his anti-CPI strategy, Nehru informed the ambassadors:

Our intelligence services have to watch communist activity, though from outside there has been very little. In fact the Indian communists have been told privately not to embarrass our government. The publicly expressed appreciation of the Indian government is another way of making it difficult for the Communist Party of India to embarrass the government. The United States are carrying on their espionage and secret service activities. They have also been buying up newspapers and spreading a network of publicity organisations in regard to which we have had to take restrictive action.<sup>105</sup>

Nehru's motive in courting the Soviet Union indicates that his policy of non-alignment was based on a strategy that suited his class interests, domestic politics as well as the strategic needs of the metropole rather than morality or ideology. The twin objectives that the American strategy in India wanted to achieve through the limited war in the Himalayas was the Sino-Soviet split, the destruction of Krishna Menon and the decimation of the left ideology in India.

## War to split

After the success of the communist revolution, China moved closer to the Soviet Union. However, Western scholars did not expect the Moscow-Beijing relationship to be long lasting. The Chinese individualism was expected to militate against Soviet collectivist ideas.<sup>106</sup> The 'free world' grand strategy envisaged communist China to cause the same fissures in the communist bloc that Tito's Yugoslavia was creating. Titoism in China could arrive either through a sudden break in relations between the two communist giants of Eurasia or a protracted process, a slower split resulting from the independent evolution of China as a nation.<sup>107</sup> The full split eventually happened after two decades, but the process had begun even before Stalin's death.

After the conclusion of the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance in February 1950,<sup>108</sup> the spectre of the Korean War and the loss of 'Chinese Titoism' began to loom large. The term 'Titoism' became famous after Stalin and Tito denounced each other's communist

parties and parted ways in 1948. From then on Tito, a professed communist, got closer to the United States and other Western powers. The Americans expected Mao to be their Tito in China. The term was so much in vogue that it was mentioned in the *Times of India* in an article on the Sino-Russian tussle over Xinjiang in 1949. The article said that Moscow was keen to exercise control over affairs of Xinjiang 'for economic and strategic reasons, not least of all because Mao might still decide to do a Tito'.<sup>109</sup>

Initially, Britain with its territorial interests in China thought of mediating between the US and China. A.P.J. Taylor even proposed that Britain should be 'America's Tito' to strengthen an effective 'third force' in a bi-polar world.<sup>110</sup> However, this proposition did not fit into the American grand strategy, which would have required an acrimonious Anglo-American relationship so as to win China's trust. The NATO alliance could not afford this display of Anglo-American rupture. The job of mediation and feigning neutrality fell in Nehru's lap, something that Nehru and Krishna Menon were more than willing to perform as it matched their worldview and gave them the leeway to popularize the idea of non-alignment.

Alternatively, it could be argued that Britain did assume the role of 'American Tito' and an 'honest broker' in Asia but rather than self-performing the task, it outsourced the job to India. Much like India, Britain too differed with the American policy of not giving recognition to China, at a time when a 'special partnership with the US was important for it to feel that it [Britain] had not lost everything'.<sup>111</sup>

Ever since the communist victory in China, the Soviets feared Mao would follow Tito in promoting anti-Sovietism. After Stalin's death, Nikita Khrushchev decided to pre-empt Mao's move by getting closer to the West. Khrushchev made a departure from 'past principles (e.g., the repudiation of the inevitability of war and the abandonment of the concept of capitalist encirclement)'.<sup>112</sup> In July 1955, Khrushchev sat together with President Eisenhower, Prime Minister Anthony Eden and French Prime Minister Guy Mollet at the Geneva conference on the peaceful uses of atomic energy that encouraged cooperation among nuclear scientists from both the blocs.<sup>113</sup> If Khrushchev and Bulganin visited India towards the end of 1955, they also went to Britain in April 1956. Khrushchev 'signed cultural agreements with Norway and Belgium in 1956, and England and France in 1957'.<sup>114</sup> Khrushchev started sending positive signals to the US, and in 1957

Washington responded by sending delegations to the Soviet Union. On 27 January 1958, the Zarubin-Lacy agreement was signed between the Soviet Union and the United States of America. The “Agreement” ‘entailed exchanges in multiple fields, such as science, technology, agriculture, radio and television, film, government, publication, tourism, and exhibitions’.<sup>115</sup>

In 1959, Soviet President Khrushchev took the unconventional diplomatic step of landing on American soil to ease Cold War tensions.<sup>116</sup> The Soviet move to rekindle its relations with America may have been guided by a desire to exploit the ‘division between the aggressive and pacifist bourgeois state in capitalist countries’.<sup>117</sup> However, the Soviets ended up accelerating the prospects of a Sino-Soviet split, the mainstay of American ‘containment’ strategy. America had successfully initiated a game of one-upmanship between China and the Soviet Union.

The Chinese were not happy with Khrushchev’s ideological deviations because they felt that US peace gestures were not sincere. After completing his US tour, Khrushchev arrived in Beijing on 30 September to participate in the tenth anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. During his speech, Khrushchev warned against taking on the capitalist system by force of arms. The Chinese differed with Khrushchev’s disarmament initiatives because according to their strategic assessment, the US monopoly financial groups that earned huge profits from the arms industry would never allow the disarmament process to succeed.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, the Chinese felt that the ‘Soviet search for detente was disorienting the masses and undermining their resolve to carry on an unrelenting struggle for the defeat of world imperialism’.<sup>119</sup>

The prospects of a Sino-Soviet split were aggravated when Moscow took a ‘neutral stance after a shooting incident on the Sino-Indian border on 25 August 1959’.<sup>120</sup> They added fuel to the fire by offering India aid and military assistance. When Tito advised the Soviets to adopt a ‘pacifying’ role in the India-China dispute, the *People’s Daily* blamed ‘the Tito clique’ for exposing themselves ‘as a group of renegades betraying socialism, hating socialist China and sowing dissensions among the socialist countries’.<sup>121</sup> When Tito had visited India in January 1959, *The People’s Daily* had similarly accused him of trying to ‘peddle wares that suit the need of imperialism’.<sup>122</sup>

Nehru was aware of the American grand strategy of causing a Sino-Soviet schism. In early 1953, a letter by Chester Bowles to the US president and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles said that the 'basic objective of our (US) foreign policy should be to bring a rift between the Soviet Union and Communist China'. Bowles had spoken about this objective to Nehru, who was convinced that this was necessary to avoid a third World War.<sup>123</sup> 'Nehru was the protagonist of the view that China is Asian first and Communist next. He held the belief that if the non-socialist countries extend contact with China, she might become more independent of the Soviet Union'.<sup>124</sup>

Speaking about the possibility of a split among the communist giants, Chester Bowles reported at the Psychological Board Meeting held on 12 June 1952 that the Indian delegation was convinced that the 'emergence of an independent China, not necessarily pro-West China' was necessary to change Russia's confrontationist approach to America. Nehru was of the opinion that 'anything that tends to push or play into Russian minds by pushing China is a mistake'.<sup>125</sup>

Many more Indians within and outside the government were aware of the American strategic outlook. In June 1957, India's ambassador to America, G.L. Mehta, commented on 'the American understanding of the possibilities of a dialectical schism between China and Russia'.<sup>126</sup> Socialist leader Madhu Limaye, in an article in *United Asia* in 1961, elaborated on the ensuing Sino-Soviet split at the Soviet Congress, where Chou En-lai defended the Albanian Communist Party and criticized the Soviets for 'bringing the dispute between fraternal parties or fraternal countries into the open'.<sup>127</sup>

The China-India war played an essential part in piercing through the communist bloc. B.N. Mullik's *My Years with Nehru* gives a complete explanation of the impact of the 1962 war on the Sino-Soviet schism. Referring to the internal chat that intelligence officers had with Nehru in March 1963 to analyse the outcome of the war, Mullik wrote, 'China has gone all out to attacking the Soviet Union, and one of the main causes of this attack was that the Soviet Union had not been partisan in favour of China in the Sino-Indian conflict'.<sup>128</sup> During the talk, Nehru mentioned some articles in the media that reflected Chinese fury against India and the Soviet Union. 'The Chinese leadership was in a pugnacious mood and they

were acting like a mad bull vis-à-vis the Soviet Union'.<sup>129</sup> The CIA document of July 1963 titled 'Implications of Sino-Soviet rupture for the US' stated that 'for most practical purposes there was now an open split in Sino-Soviet relations. The virulence of the present confrontation, the directness of the most recent insults and accusations at Moscow, and the theological certainty of both disputants reflect new dimensions of antagonism too extensive to be bridged.'<sup>130</sup>

The Soviet Union that was looking for a big ally in Asia to counter China willingly took over the burden of supporting poor India. America took a back seat with an eye on reaching out to China. Nehru, a brilliant mind on geopolitics and foreign policy, was fully aware of the global mechanisms that were underway in the 1960s. He was aware that the West was no longer interested in taking on India's burden. He informed his intelligence community,

Neither America nor any other Western power liked to be aligned with us and take on their shoulders what was essentially an Indian burden. If this was done, China could immediately turn to Russia and point out that mistake which she had committed in supporting India. So this would again bring the Russians and the Chinese together.<sup>131</sup>

Nehru erred in his assessment of America's grand strategy in believing that America was working to include the Soviet Union in the first world, whereas America was actually aiming at bringing China into the first world. By 1963, less than a year after the Sino-Indian war, Roger Hilsman, US assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern Affairs, started talking about the 'Open Door' policy on reviving trade with mainland China. The bigger American dilemma was 'the extent to which the door was to be opened for China to stem any possibility of the revival of Stalinist solidarity between USSR and China',<sup>132</sup> after the split achieved with the China-India war. The Europeans too felt that China could not be allowed to languish in isolation for too long.

## **Krishna Menon – the fall guy**

The Indian National Congress won India's first general elections in 1952. In the same year Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected president of the United States. Eisenhower brought in John Foster Dulles as his foreign policy adviser. Nehru appointed Krishna Menon as the leader of the Indian delegation to the United Nations after Vijayalakshmi Pandit was elevated to the position of president of the UN General Assembly.<sup>133</sup> During his stint at the United Nations, Menon became Nehru's 'answer to Dulles'.<sup>134</sup> B.K. Nehru felt that Menon's 'one speech at the United Nations can destroy – and indeed often has destroyed months of patient work by Indian ambassadors in the United States'.<sup>135</sup>

Galbraith called Menon a 'Hindu Dulles – alienating people as he goes'.<sup>136</sup> In the US foreign policy circuit, Menon was one of the most hated foreign representative at the UN.<sup>137</sup>

However, Menon's pronouncements in the United Nations against John Foster Dulles's foreign policy approaches cannot be the sole yardstick to measure the health of the Indo-US relationship in the mid-1950s. There is need to give due cognizance to the shades of grey in the relationship. In 1955, Menon visited Beijing to seek the release of four American airmen imprisoned in China. The release pleased the American administration, and they invited Menon for informal and private talks to America.<sup>138</sup> Menon trusted the American hospitals and underwent a brain surgery for removal of blood clots at Montefiore Hospital in Manhattan at the end of September 1961.<sup>139</sup> More importantly, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., the US representative at the United Nations (the battleground where Menon spoke against American imperialism) in the mid-1950s, was Menon's friend. Both consulted and collaborated with each other on many issues at the United Nations. In 1958, Lodge visited India and praised Menon in his various meetings.<sup>140</sup> In 1962, Lodge even addressed an election meeting in Bombay for Menon.<sup>141</sup> In one of his letters to Kennedy, Galbraith mentions the American strategy of 'building Menon up' by giving him 'hot-button issues at the UN'.<sup>142</sup> Menon's tirade against US imperialism created the perception of Indo-US distance and discord and consolidated India's position as an independent neutral.

Menon's popularity surged after his marathon speech in the United Nations defending India's stand on Kashmir. He won the 1957



parliamentary elections from North Bombay and was made the defence minister. It was hoped that Menon's engagement in domestic administration would keep him away from the United Nations, where his lectures on anti-colonialism and American imperialism were considered to be harming American interests. Commenting on Menon's rise, *The New Republic* wrote that his 'elevation to a position of domestic political importance may have been the only way out of a difficult situation'.<sup>143</sup> The development was reported by the *Christian Science Monitor* as a political balancing act where

a little weight to each side of a balanced cabinet and a balanced Congress Party; into the left-hand scale he has placed his long-time confidant V.K. Krishna Menon; into the right hand-scale, the shrewd pro-Western Congress leader of Bombay state, Mr. S.K. Patil.<sup>144</sup>

Menon, identified as a 'crypto communist', combined progressivism with nationalism. His powerful defence of India's position on Kashmir at the UN and his decisive actions in Goa strengthened his nationalist credentials. The Indian bourgeoisie elite hated Menon not only because of his anti-Americanism but also because he was fast emerging as an heir to Nehru.

India had successfully embarked upon two military missions under the stewardship of Defence Minister Menon in Goa and in Congo. His detractors said that Nehru and Menon had launched Goa operations with elections in mind. B.K. Nehru wrote from Washington, 'many high officials in the state department consider that the Goa operation was conceived and launched for the personal benefit of our defence minister who was fighting an election'.<sup>145</sup> In May 1962, a few months after success in Goa, Menon won a landslide electoral victory from North Bombay defeating his arch-rival Acharya Kriplani, the representative of the right wing in Indian politics.<sup>146</sup>

Leftism combined with nationalism was a dangerous mix for Indian reactionaries and Americans alike. The Indian right wing that had failed to be a part of the nationalist struggle against colonial rule did not want to be a laggard in the postcolonial settings too. They did not want the liberal left to be the sole occupants of the postcolonial nationalist space.

Menon's surging popularity impacted Indo-US relations. In October 1962, China declared war against India. War presented an opportunity to

Menon as well as his detractors to prove their nationalism. As defence minister of the country, Menon was keen to win the war and add another feather to his cap. The Indian conservatives, right liberals (socialists) and the American administration wanted to make sure that victory against China did not make Menon a national hero.<sup>147</sup>

Once the Chinese had moved deep into the Indian territory, Menon sought American help to vanquish the advancing Chinese. But Ambassador Galbraith was very clear, he 'wanted to aid India concretely and effectively in its hour of need, but not at the cost of throwing Menon a lifeline just as he was floundering'.<sup>148</sup>

The Indian Air Force (IAF) that possessed 22 combat squadrons with some 500 aircraft did not provide close air support to the Indian Army battling the Chinese in NEFA. Ambassador Galbraith and B.N Mullick, Intelligence Bureau chief, advised against the use of air power, as they believed that use of offensive air would result in escalation. However, many wanted the Indian Air force to deploy its assets in tactical mode on the borders, with the American bombers to provide cover against any Chinese attack on Indian cities, whereas Galbraith wanted the conflict to remain limited and did not want to offer a reason for the Chinese and the Soviets to come together.<sup>149</sup> Had India used its fighters, scores of Chinese soldiers would have been killed on the tracks heading towards Assam and India could have emerged victorious. But that victory would have put paid the political manoeuvring that was underway during the war to demonize Mao and Menon in India.

The Indian politicians joined Galbraith in denying Menon any political victory from war. In eighteen out of the thirty days that the India-China war lasted, the Indian Parliament and press were engaged in driving Krishna Menon out of the Ministry of Defence.<sup>150</sup> The remaining days were spent in preparing a shopping list of arms to be purchased from the Americans.

Initially, Nehru dithered at the idea of divesting Menon of all cabinet responsibilities. However, eleven days after the outbreak of war, Nehru took away the defence ministry from Menon and retained him as minister of defence production. Menon's detractors were not satisfied and demanded Menon's complete obliteration from the cabinet. Finally, on 7 November 1962, while the war was still on, Menon resigned. According to Inder Malhotra, 'over this [the resignation] there was as much glee in the United

States as in India'.<sup>151</sup> Soon after Menon's removal from the cabinet, a "victory" procession was held in Mumbai, where Minoo Masani taunted Menon by congratulating Kriplani: 'You have won the North Bombay election after six months Dada'.<sup>152</sup> America concentrated on demolishing Menon while Nehru was spared because he was a man of the masses and any attempts to demonize him may have backfired on the USA. In the end, Menon became the fall guy.

Along with Menon, the Communist Party of India also stood maligned. On 6 November 1962, a thirty-one-member all-party National Defence Council was constituted by the prime minister, and communists were excluded from it. The *Indian Express* recommended

weeding out the indigenous communist vermin from such organizations and bodies... . There can be no place for these faceless traitors in any war committee or council. Despite their belated protestations of patriotism, they cannot be trusted and must be put effectively beyond the pale.<sup>153</sup>

In the wake of war, the Communist Party of India split into three distinct factions. Perhaps it was the realization of this objective that made Y.B. Chavan see victory in defeat when he said, 'The first casualties of the unashamed aggression of the Chinese on India are Marxism and Leninism'.<sup>154</sup>

The campaign against Menon had started much before the war. B. Shiva Rao, a prominent Indian parliamentarian and influential journalist, wrote to Pandit Nehru on 3 December 1959,

I am greatly disturbed by your insistence on keeping Krishna Menon in the cabinet. We are facing a grave danger from a communist power. As you are aware there are widespread apprehensions about his [Menon] having pro-communist sympathies.<sup>155</sup>

Shiva Rao belonged to the illustrious Rau family. His two brothers B.N. Rau, and Benegal Rama Rau had played crucial roles in the United Nations during the Korean crisis. Rao, a staunch anti-communist, regarded the

communist cadre as the most crucial impediment to India's war effort. He further wrote,

We must fight the communist party in the country and the communist menace from outside in a whole-hearted way. That I feel will not be possible, unless the cabinet collectively and individually has a clear-cut point of view without any reservations in regard to the communist party and movement.<sup>156</sup>

Rao went on to compare Menon to Lord Richard Burdon Haldane (1856–1928), Britain's war minister during the First World War, who was hounded from office in 1915 by a relentless media campaign. It was alleged he had 'once declared Germany to be a sort of spiritual home to him'.<sup>157</sup> Shiva Rao also suggested that Nehru drop Menon from his cabinet, just as Churchill had yielded to public opinion and excluded 'Halifax, Simon and Hoare from the cabinet'.<sup>158</sup> Shiv Rao's letter was a precursor to a campaign against Menon that subsequently erupted in full form during the India-China war. In fact, the demonization of Menon continued even after the war.

B.K. Nehru hired Col E.C. Kavanagh and Mrs Isaacson of John Roney Associates, an American public relations firm, to improve India's public image in America and build a campaign against Krishna Menon.<sup>159</sup> The American public equated Indian neutralism with "pro-communistic" while the same public coupled 'Swedish neutralism with "pro-Americanism"'.<sup>160</sup> Stressing the need for India not to shy away from 'buying' a public image, Kavanagh said, 'the American public cannot comprehend Indian policy that wars with Peking [Beijing] and at the same time requests recognition of its enemy in the United Nations'. To make America understand India better, he first proposed a program titled 'LIFT' – Let India Fight Tyranny, and later changed it to read 'HIFT – Help India Fight Tyranny'.<sup>161</sup>

An example of Kavanagh's perception management game was George Dixon's column titled '*Senators Get Together and Cut a Menon*' [emphasis added]. Dixon's article narrated the conversation between the US Foreign Relations members who got together for 'a free for all panel discussion on former defence minister V.K. Krishna Menon'. Giving a detailed description of the discussion Dixon wrote:

One of the most dignified of the galaxy shouted with feeling:

When I came back from an inspection tour of India a couple of years ago I told the committee that Menon was no *good bum* [emphasis added]. You'd have thought I attacked the motherhood. That was two years ago.

The second committee member reminded him that

Know our professed regard for that unmitigated *Jackass* [emphasis added] cheapened out rapidly after that. Then the Indians themselves got wise to Menon and Prime Minister Nehru finally fired him for messing up the nation's defence and we had to bail the country out or it'd have been overrun by Red China.

'It was a constructive job of firing,' offered a third member.

Sure, said a fourth Foreign Relations expert, but has Menon's influence on Nehru ended?

That's what I want to know, said the first speaker.

Notables from India visit our committee all the time. They never cease coming. Within the last 60 days I've had long sessions with representatives of three vital elements in the country. They are Sudhir Ghosh, a member of the Indian Parliament, Biju Patnaik, Chief Minister of the state of Orissa, who is being groomed for the defence post and Charman Lal, a leading Buddhist Monk.

'I asked each of them if Nehru was really finished with Krishna Menon and they assured me Krish was better than dead. The Monk told me our Prime Minister never again will have anything to do with a creature like Krishna Menon

I know said the first speaker

but the newspapers said supporter of Krishna Menon had launched the first English language daily newspaper in the Indian capital since independence.'

"Yeh" said the second member, and the story said the government allotted this sheet, *The Patriot* more than double the newsprint normally allotted for new dallies'.<sup>162</sup>

## Conclusion

Historical analysis cannot afford to discard the role of strategy in international affairs. Understanding limited wars and bilateral relations through the prism of strategies employed in the period is as important as the official statements and record of events. This book has attempted to understand the India-US relations in context of the American grand strategy of 'Soviet containment' that was achieved by causing the Sino-Soviet split. The India-China war of 1962 was not merely a territorial dispute over contours on the map. The 1962 war may not rank high in terms of 'duration, scale, casualties (or) issues',<sup>163</sup> but its political impact was more far reaching than the military debacle. It left a lasting influence on India's domestic politics. The Soviet Union and almost the entire world supported India on the China issue, yet India was defeated. The war left Nehru crestfallen, Krishna Menon politically decimated and the Communist Party of India divided.

The beginning of the Indo-Soviet interactions in the mid-1950s shaped Nehru's image as a progressive anti-imperialist whose non-alignment had a soft corner for the Soviets. But such notions are based on the assumption that India's proximity to the Soviet Union necessarily meant that India was tilted away from America. On the contrary, the ruling Indian elite was largely anti-communist. America did not fear India going the communist way. It was confident that the Indian elite would comfortably pocket Soviet aid without ideologically aligning with it. In fact, America effectively used the Soviet-India ties to sow the seeds of distrust in the Sino-Soviet communist bloc.

In addition, being non-aligned did not preclude India from fulfilling American strategic interests of keeping global communism at bay. The advocacy of non-alignment by India was not necessarily antithetical to American global goals. Non-alignment was beneficial for both, it helped India portray its independence from the West and the America to gain a trustworthy mediator. After the arrival of communist rule in mainland China, India became an important neutral in America's "slow-split" strategy to convert Mao into a "Chinese Tito". The American policy catered to the fact that on occasion Indian neutrality would clash with its activities, yet it wanted 'India to be strong and a successful example of an alternative to Communism' in Asia.<sup>164</sup> America wanted to prevent the communists from

assuming the leadership of the Afro-Asian world. Thus, it was in America's interest that Nehru with his idealism and ideological aversion to colonialism be seen as a world leader; a worthy competitor to Mao Zedong.

While the Soviet entry in India after Stalin's demise is extensively used to underpin India's strategic autonomy, the overt American penetration of India after the Suez crisis is rarely taken into consideration while analysing Nehru's foreign policy. Until the Suez crisis, America was happy to play second fiddle to the British vis-à-vis India.<sup>165</sup> As America-India partnership deepened in the mid-1950s, the India-China relations deteriorated. India became America's as strategically, after the flight of the Dalai Lama to India, America stepped in with an aid package. It sought India's indulgence in pressurizing China hard on the Himalayan border as well as highlighting violations of human rights in Tibet. The US used foreign aid to pursue its strategic objectives while simultaneously nudge India to seek Soviet aid. The strategy yielded dividends for both. America tamed international communism and India halted the march of its communist party.

Discrediting Nehru on the China issue was of chief importance for the right wing inside and outside the Congress party. However, they had to tread carefully because Nehru was the most respected and popular leader of postcolonial India. Moreover, Nehru's health was fast deteriorating and his replacement as prime minister was in the cards. Therefore, Krishna Menon – the most eligible leftist to succeed Nehru – became the fall guy of the India-China war. The constant barrage of bad media coverage ensured that Menon was delegitimized. Incidentally, Menon was also the most hated figure within the US administration. The viciousness of the attacks by the right-wingers against Krishna Menon and the communists gives an impression that more than being a territorial war, the India-China war was a class war indulged in by the Indian bourgeoisie for domestic political gains.

John Kenneth Galbraith, the US ambassador to India in 1962, was another major actor playing the twin game of engineering Krishna Menon's fall.<sup>166</sup> Galbraith denied military aid to the Indian defence ministry headed by Menon. America knew that their support, especially the provision of air support, could alter the outcome of war. Galbraith refused to extend support, because anything less than a total defeat at the hands of the Chinese would have established Menon as an effective leader and achieved nothing in terms of puncturing the left movement in India. The war

emboldened the lobby within India that associated Chinese belligerence to Krishna Menon and Nehru's reluctance to openly embrace America.

The 1962 military defeat was not only a victory for the American strategists, but through it, the dominant classes in India also achieved their purpose of relegating Indian communists to the fringes of the Indian political landscape. The right-wing elite used the war to vilify and brand Krishna Menon and the communists as traitors, to prove their nationalist credentials and reiterate their commitment to the America empire.

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# Index

101 detachment [18](#), [43](#)

4H Club Foundation [59](#)

ABCD collaboration [17](#)

Acheson, Dean [149](#)

Ackerman, Carl [24](#)

Afro-Asian conference [154](#)

‘Aid India Club’ [124](#)

Ali, Asaf [108–109](#)

Ali, S. Mahmud [133](#)

Allen, George [117](#)

All India Sindworks Merchants Association [100](#)

All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) [71](#)

Alwaye Union Christian College [36](#)

American Academy of Political Science [54](#)

American air bases [5](#)

American Alpine Club (ACC) [134](#)

American capital [1](#), [57](#), [66](#), [113–114](#), [158](#)

American capitalism [3](#), [50–51](#)

American Century [1](#), [3–5](#), [16](#), [27–28](#), [53](#), [81–82](#), [87](#), [108](#), [147](#)

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) [31](#), [50](#), [52](#), [67–68](#)

‘American Country Life’ Commission [59](#)

‘American creed’ [4](#)

American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) [90–92](#)

Americanism [1](#), [10–11](#), [17](#), [52–53](#), [71](#), [82](#), [96](#), [114](#)

American power [3](#), [5](#), [16](#), [41](#), [80](#), [102](#)

American progressivism [51](#)

American soft power [11](#), [80](#), [99](#)

Amery, Leo [28](#)

*Amrita Bazar Patrika* (newspaper) [7](#), [14](#), [43](#)

Anglo-Americans [147](#), [151](#); acrimony [42](#); camp [69](#); collaboration [30](#); combine [16–17](#); cultural kinship [83](#); forces [11](#), [38](#); friction [11](#), [16](#); hegemony [155](#) (*see also* hegemon); ideology [53](#); imperialists [112](#); intelligence alliance [41–42](#); relations [6–17](#), [35](#), [163](#); rivalry [5](#); role [156](#); rupture [163](#); world [3](#)

anti-Americanism [95](#), [114](#), [155](#), [157](#), [166](#)  
anti-China [136–137](#), [143](#), [158](#)  
anti-colonialism [17](#), [166](#)  
Appleby, Paul H. [62–64](#)  
*Asia & the Americas (Asia)* (magazine) [22–23](#), [30](#)  
‘Asia for Asiatics’ [148](#)  
Asia Foundation [93–98](#), [106](#)  
*Asian Student, The* (newsletter) [94](#)  
Assam regiment [20](#)  
Associated Press of America [24](#)  
asymmetries [9](#), [12](#)  
*Atlanta Constitution* (newspaper) [24](#)  
Atlantic Charter [5](#), [6](#), [32](#), [35](#)  
Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) [120](#)  
‘Atoms for Peace’ [119](#)  
Austin, Granville [98](#)  
Axis powers [32](#)

Babel, Noel [136](#)  
Bajpai, G.S. [25–26](#), [34](#), [109–110](#)  
Baker-Nunn camera [120](#)  
Baldwin, Henson [27](#)  
Baldwin, Roger [30–31](#), [52](#), [67–68](#), [77](#), [138](#)  
Ball, George [160](#)  
Balogh, Thomas [63–64](#)  
Baluchistan [20](#)  
Bandung conference [154](#), [160](#)  
*Banker, The* (magazine) [38](#)  
Barnouw, Victor [92](#)  
Bateman, A.M. [64](#)  
Bateson, Gregory [79](#), [101](#)  
Battle Act [117](#)  
Bayley, David [92](#)  
Bell 47-G.3 aircraft [141](#)  
Bellamy, Edward [65](#)  
Belle, Minnie [23](#)  
Benton, Bill [28](#)  
Berle, Adolf Jr. [88](#)  
Bernard, Theos [33](#)  
Bhabha, Homi [120](#)  
Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan [98](#)  
Bhilai steel plant [158](#)  
Birla, G.D. [7–8](#), [35](#), [58](#), [69–70](#), [77](#), [95](#)  
Bliss, Don Carroll Jr. [82](#)  
Bliven, Bruce [31](#)  
Blum, Robert [96](#)  
Blume, James [120](#)  
Bombay [52](#), [54](#), [67](#), [88](#), [94–95](#), [154](#); American naval intelligence at, PWA conference [31](#) (*see also* Progressive Writer’s Association (PWA)); atomic energy [120](#), [122](#) (*see also* Trombay); bullion market [82](#); CARE office in [99](#) (*see also* CARE); CPI organ [35](#) (*see also* Communist Party of India

(CPI)); elections in [166–168](#) (*see also* Krishna Menon); merchants association [100](#); OWI office [28](#); plan [4–5](#), [23](#), [56](#); port [119](#); presidency [82](#); University of [97](#)

Books Act of India [24](#)

Bose, Subhas C. [23](#), [54](#), [67](#), [69–70](#)

Bowers, Faubion [150](#); *see also* MacArthur, Douglas; Rau, Santha R.

Bowles, Chester [57](#), [60](#), [62](#), [91](#), [93–94](#), [99](#), [113](#), [141](#), [164](#)

Brass, Paul R. [13](#)

Brereton, Lewis [17](#)

Bretton Woods Conference [4](#), [5](#), [14](#)

British bankruptcy [2](#), [14](#)

British Columbia [23](#)

British Empire [2–3](#), [5–6](#), [41–42](#), [79](#), [81](#)

British Information Service [27](#), [34](#)

Bromfield, Louis [7](#)

Brown, C.K. [22](#)

Brussels [52](#), [66–67](#), [69](#)

Brussels Congress and the League against Imperialism (BCLI) [66](#); *see also* Brussels

Buck, Pearl S. [7](#), [23](#), [30–31](#), [100](#), [109](#), [138](#)

Bulganin, Nikolai [160](#), [163](#)

Cabinet Mission of 1946 [7](#)

Caillaux, M. [66](#)

Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMPO) [86–87](#)

Camp Knox [22](#)

CARE [99–101](#)

Cariappa, K.M. [152](#)

Carlill, Stephen Hope [16](#)

Caroe, O.K. [24](#), [47](#), [134](#)

Castle Rock [33](#)

*CBI-Roundup* (newspaper) [18](#)

Celler, Emanuel [108](#)

censorship [16](#), [22–24](#), [35](#)

Censorship Control Department (CCD) [22](#), [24](#)

Ceylon [37](#), [53](#), [59](#), [94](#), [106](#)

Chagla, M.C. [98](#), [142](#)

Chakrabarty, Bidyut [55](#)

Chakravarti, D.N. [87](#)

Chamber of Princes [25–26](#)

Chandrasekhar, S. [88](#)

Chaudhuri, Nirad [19](#), [43](#)

Chevy Chase club [142](#)

Chiang Kai-shek [7](#), [35](#), [94](#), [136](#), [148](#), [151](#), [154](#); departure [134](#); government [151](#); leader under American control [114](#), [126](#); proposal [36](#); successor [111](#)

Chibber, Vivek [5](#)

Childs, Marquis [153](#)

China-Burma-India (CBI) [11](#), [14](#), [17](#), [21–22](#), [24](#), [42–44](#)

China Lobby [31](#), [114](#), [145](#)

China National Aviation Corporation [21](#)

*China Report* (journal) [172](#)

China White Paper [63](#), [128](#)

Chinese Expeditionary Force (CEF) [24](#)  
 ‘Chinese Tito’ [162](#), [170](#)  
 Choel, J.K. [150](#)  
*Chota Roundup* (newspaper) [20](#), [43](#), [44](#)  
 Chou En-lai [154](#), [157](#), [164](#)  
*Christian Century* (magazine) [22](#)  
*Christian Science Monitor* (newspaper) [122–123](#), [166](#)  
 Churchill, Winston [5–7](#), [12](#), [23](#), [32](#), [147](#), [154](#), [169](#)  
 CIA [80](#), [93](#), [126](#), [138](#), [144](#), [154](#); agent [37](#), [70](#), [136](#); aided rebellion in Tibet [66](#), [117](#), [133](#), [135](#);  
 document of [165](#); driven anti-communist network [94](#); involvement in Indian affairs [96](#), [98–99](#);  
 operation [71](#); operatives [94](#)  
 Clark Getts Lecture Bureau [30](#)  
 Cohen, Creagh [25–26](#)  
 Cohen, Stephen [92](#)  
 colonialism [2](#), [3](#), [7](#), [8](#), [16](#), [68](#), [145](#), [147–148](#)  
 colored cosmopolitanism [148](#)  
 Columbia Broadcasting System network [123](#)  
 Cominform [160](#)  
*Command Post* (newspaper) [24](#)  
 ‘Committee of One Million, The’ [138](#)  
 Commonwealth [3](#), [29](#), [111–113](#), [126](#), [128](#), [147](#), [149](#), [151–153](#)  
 communist China [3](#), [123](#), [133](#), [135](#), [139](#), [149](#), [151](#), [157–158](#), [162](#), [164](#)  
 Communist Party of India (CPI) [32](#), [35](#), [65](#), [70](#), [138](#), [161–162](#)  
 community development [1](#), [11](#), [53](#), [60–61](#), [63](#)  
 Compton, Carl Taylor [88](#)  
 Congo [132](#)  
*Congressional Record* [35](#)  
 Congress Socialist Party (CSP) [65–66](#), [69](#)  
 conservative bourgeoisie [5](#)  
 Cooper, John Sherman [40](#), [121–122](#), [124](#)  
 Cooper, Kent [24](#)  
 Coordination of Information (COI) [28](#)  
 Council of Mosque [95](#)  
 counter-hegemony [11](#)  
*Courier Journal* (newspaper) [157](#)  
 Cove, W.G. [30](#)  
 Crane, Robert [33](#)  
 Cripps mission [7](#), [23](#), [27](#)  
 Cripps, Stafford [7](#)  
 ‘crypto communist’ [166](#)  
 Curran, J.A. Jr. [88](#)  
 Curti, Merle [88](#)  
 Curtis Wright R.3550 engines [141](#)

*Daily Worker, The* (newspaper) [112](#)  
 Dalai Lama [132–134](#), [136–139](#), [143–144](#), [171](#)  
 Dalai Lama Charitable Trust [138](#)  
 Dalal, Ardeshir [113](#)  
 Damodar Valley project [52](#), [57](#)  
 Dange, S.A. [31](#)



Danial, Howard [23](#)  
Das, Tarak Nath [88](#)  
Davidson, W.M. [22](#)  
Democratic Research Service (DRS) [94](#)  
dependency trap [10](#)  
dependent capitalism [3](#), [13](#)  
Desai, M.J. [62](#)  
Desai, Morarji [95](#), [122](#), [142](#)  
Deshmukh, C.D. [61](#), [83](#), [108](#)  
Deshmukh, P.S. [101](#)  
de-Stalinization [161](#)  
Development Loan Fund (DLF) [124–125](#)  
Devi, Gayatri [6](#), [14](#)  
deviant community [68–69](#)  
Dey, S.K. [60](#), [87](#)  
Dolan, Brooke [134](#)  
Donovan, William [28](#)  
'Doolittle raid' [27](#), [45](#)  
Douel, Wallace R. [111](#)  
Douglas C-54 Skymaster [117](#)  
Dutt, S. [90](#)

*Eastern Economist, The* (journal) [4](#), [5](#), [14](#), [41](#), [48–49](#), [58](#), [74](#)  
East India Company [2](#)  
Eccles, David [151](#)  
Edwardian England [66](#)  
Eldridge, Fred [19](#)  
elite networks [11](#), [80–81](#)  
Elmhirst, Leonard [22](#)  
Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs [31](#)  
Emerson, Gertrude [23](#), [45](#)  
Ensminger, Douglas [85–87](#)  
epistemic community [11](#), [80](#), [102](#)  
estrangement [9](#), [12](#), [115–116](#)  
Etawah [60](#)  
European empires [2](#), [3](#)  
*Ex-CBI Roundup* (newspaper) [19–20](#), [44](#)  
*Extension India* [35](#)

F-104 supersonic planes [141](#)  
Fabians [52](#), [56](#), [65–67](#)  
Ferozshah Road [29](#)  
Fischer, Louis [23](#), [30](#), [35](#), [48](#), [111](#), [127](#)  
Fisher, Dorothy C. [7](#)  
Fisher, Margret [92](#)  
Fitze, K.S. [26](#)  
Five-Year Plans [1](#), [12](#), [60](#)  
Fletcher, A.L. [62–63](#)  
*Flying Eagle* (ship) [119](#)  
Forbes, F. Peterson [122](#)

Ford Foundation [29](#), [59–60](#), [63–64](#), [80](#), [84–87](#), [90](#), [101–102](#), [142](#)  
Ford, Henry [84](#)  
Forrest, William [24](#)  
Frankel, Francine R. [1](#), [12](#), [66](#), [67](#), [76](#)  
“free press movement” [24](#)  
‘Free World Mission’ [124](#)  
friendship, commerce and navigation (FCN) treaty [112](#)  
Friends of Freedom for India (FFI) [30](#), [82](#)  
Fry, L.A.C. [37](#)  
Fulbright Program [88–89](#)

Gandhian [56](#), [60](#), [69](#), [88](#), [133](#), [155](#)  
Gandhi-Birla-Patel trio [69](#), [70](#)  
Gandhi, Devdas [33](#)  
Gandhi, M.K. [7](#), [12](#), [23–24](#), [27](#), [29–30](#), [32–33](#), [35](#), [55](#), [60](#), [63](#), [67–70](#)  
Garling, J. [109](#)  
Geneva Convention on Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy [120](#)  
George, David Lloyd [65](#)  
Ghana [119](#), [159](#), [161](#)  
Ghosh, Sudhir [87](#), [169](#)  
GIs [2](#), [16](#), [19–21](#), [28](#), [43–44](#)  
global capitalism [2](#), [9](#)  
global double victory [148](#)  
*Globe and Mail* (newspaper) [137](#)  
Goa [119](#), [132–133](#), [155](#), [159–160](#), [166–167](#)  
Grady, Henry F. [28](#), [108](#), [113](#)  
Graebner, Norman A. [9](#), [15](#)  
Great Depression [3](#), [50](#), [54](#), [67](#), [69](#)  
great powers [1](#), [148](#), [180](#)  
Grosvenor Square [11](#)  
G.S. Mandidip Paper Mills [138](#)

Hagelberg, G. [111](#)  
Hague Academy of International Law [80](#)  
Halifax, Lord [34](#), [41](#), [57](#), [169](#)  
Hanna, Mark [81](#)  
Hardt, Michael [51](#)  
Harriman, Averell [141](#)  
Harvard University [23](#), [50](#), [96](#)  
Hathaway Laidlow of London [20](#)  
hegemon [1–4](#), [9–11](#), [15](#), [40](#), [80–81](#), [89](#), [130](#), [155](#)  
Henderson, Loy [110](#)  
Henri, Sokolove [70](#)  
Heppner, Richard P. [32](#)  
hierarchy of dominance [11](#)  
Higham, John [68–69](#)  
Hill, C.J. [22](#)  
Himatsinhji, K.S. [26–27](#)  
Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) [71](#)  
Hindustan Chemicals and Fertilisers [125](#)

*Hindustan Times* (newspaper) [8](#), [30](#), [33–34](#), [46–47](#), [120](#), [129](#)

Hocking, William [23](#)

Hoffman, Paul [60](#), [93](#)

Hogey, Michael [94–95](#)

Holmes, John Haynes [30](#), [88](#)

Hong Kong [37](#), [134](#)

Hoover, Herbert [54](#)

Hot Springs, Virginia [29](#)

Hungary [94](#), [116](#), [155](#)

Husain, S.N. [94](#)

Hussain, Fazli [30](#)

Hussain, Syed [30](#)

India-Burma Theatre [16](#), [19](#), [21–22](#), [42](#)

India-China [122](#), [132–133](#), [136](#), [138](#), [143](#)

India-China war (1962) [1](#), [118](#), [133](#), [137](#), [167](#), [169–171](#)

India International Centre (IIC) [83](#)

India League in England [30](#)

India League of America [30](#), [150](#)

India Lobby [16](#), [30](#), [31](#), [47](#), [182](#)

Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) [120](#)

Indian Army [2](#), [20](#), [26–27](#), [32](#), [38](#), [45](#), [110](#), [152](#)

Indian Council of Medical Research [83](#)

Indian elite [1](#), [4](#), [7](#), [27](#), [50](#), [80](#), [83](#), [101](#), [102](#), [108](#), [135](#), [144](#), [147](#), [161](#), [170](#); agenda [156](#); co-opting the [79](#); ideological moorings [71](#); postcolonial consciousness [11](#)

Indian exceptionalism [10](#)

Indian Home Rule League of America (IHRL) [30](#), [82](#)

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) [89](#)

Indian National Congress (INC) [4](#), [5](#), [18](#), [52](#), [165](#)

Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) [71](#)

Indian Village Service (IVS) [59](#)

*India Today* (news magazine) [31](#), [41](#)

India-US [2](#), [9](#), [11](#), [116](#), [132](#), [170](#)

Indo-American Development Program [60](#)

Indo-US discord [115](#)

Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS) [65](#)

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) [122](#)

International Committee of Political Prisoners [52](#)

International Control Commission [132](#)

International Free Trade Union Committee (IFTUC) [70](#)

International House at Tokyo [83](#)

International Monetary Fund (IMF) [4](#), [79](#)

isolationism [4](#)

Iyengar, H.V.R. [122](#)

Jan Sangha [137](#)

Jayaprakash Narayan (JPN) [52–53](#), [70–71](#), [73](#), [133](#), [136–138](#)

Jebb, Gladwyn [152](#)

*Jefferson* (ship) [119](#)

Jewish Lobby in America [31](#)

Jha, L.K. [142](#)  
 Jinnah, Muhammad Ali [28–29](#)  
 ‘John Brown’s Body’ [20](#)  
 John Day and Company [30](#)  
 John Roney Associates [169](#)  
 Johnson, Louis [27](#), [100](#)  
 Johnson, Ray [95](#)

Kabir, Humayun [83](#)  
 Kalimpong [134–136](#)  
 Kalischer, Peter [123](#)  
*Kansas City Star* (newspaper) [27](#)  
 Kashmir [92](#), [109](#), [115–116](#), [124](#), [126](#), [143](#), [152](#), [155](#)  
*Kashmir Princess* (aircraft) [154](#)  
 Kaul, B.M. [109](#)  
 Kaul, T.N. [142](#)  
 Kaur, Rajkumari Amrit [63](#), [85](#), [100–101](#)  
 Kaviraj, Sudipta [68](#), [71](#)  
 Kennedy, Charles Stuart [173](#)  
 Kennedy, John F. [61](#), [87](#), [124–125](#), [133](#), [140–142](#), [159–160](#), [166](#)  
 Kennedy, Paul M. [12](#), [16](#), [72](#)  
 Keynesian [51](#)  
 Khan, Ayub [136](#)  
 Khan, Yasmin [18](#)  
 Khilnani, Sunil [156](#)  
 Khrushchev, Nikita [124](#), [139](#), [154](#), [160–161](#), [163–164](#)  
 Knipe, Frederick W. [83](#)  
 knowledge production [2](#), [79](#)  
 Kondapi, C. [148](#)  
 Korea [2](#), [126](#), [148–152](#), [154](#), [156](#), [162](#), [168](#), [172](#)  
 Korean: Commission [148](#); conflict [117](#), [149](#); crisis [3](#), [143](#), [154](#), [168](#), [192](#); factions [3](#); war [113–115](#)  
 Krassin, A.K. [120](#)  
 Kriplani, Acharya [137](#), [167–168](#)  
 Krishiker Lok party [95](#)  
 Krishna, K.B. [55](#)  
 Krishnamachari, T.T. [122](#)  
 Krishnamachari, V.T. [25](#)  
 Krishna Menon, V.K. [30](#), [58](#), [68](#), [114–115](#), [132](#), [139–140](#), [163](#), [165](#); campaign against [169](#); destruction of [162](#); diatribe against American imperialism [114](#); finished [170](#); forward policy [142](#); in Goa and Congo [167](#); a ‘Hindu Dulles’ [166](#); most influential leftist to succeed Nehru [171](#); pronouncements in the UN [166](#); relations with America [132](#); resigned [168](#); suggestion [149](#); surging popularity [167](#)  
 Kumarappa, Jagadish Mohandas [88](#)  
 Kunzru, Hirday Nath [30](#)  
 Kux, Dennis [9](#)

Ladhak [92](#)  
 Lal, Chaman [33–34](#)  
 Lal, Gobind Bihari [88](#)  
 Lall, K.B. [114](#)

Lamont, Illinois [120](#)  
Laos [132](#)  
Larsen, Roy E. [25](#)  
Laski, H.J. [54](#)  
Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial [87](#)  
Law Review Commission [98](#)  
League for Industrial Democracy [65](#)  
Ledo road [8](#), [22](#)  
Lend-Lease [6](#), [17](#), [39–42](#), [89](#)  
*Le Soir* (newspaper) [139](#)  
‘Letter of Transmittal’ [114](#)  
Lewis, John [53](#)  
liberal international order [2](#), [3](#), [17](#)  
*Life* magazine [3](#), [19](#), [111](#), [115](#)  
*Light of India* (movie) [111](#)  
Li Hung Chang [81](#)  
Limaye, Satu P. [9](#), [15](#)  
Linlithgow, Lord [28](#)  
Lin Yutang [7](#), [30–31](#)  
Lodge, Henry Cabot Jr. [166](#)  
Lohia, Ram Manohar [137](#), [151–153](#), [155](#)  
loss of China [111–112](#), [114](#), [126](#), [153](#)  
Lovestone, Jay [52](#), [70](#), [138](#)  
Luce-Celler Act [108](#)  
Luce, Clare Boothe [7](#), [16](#), [19](#), [24](#), [30–31](#), [42](#), [108](#)  
Luce, Henry [3](#), [4](#), [19](#), [29](#)

MacArthur, Douglas [150](#)  
Macleod, Josephine [81](#)  
Madame Chiang Kai-shek [29–30](#)  
Maharaja of Bikaner [25](#)  
Maharaja of Kapurthala [26](#)  
Maharaja of Patiala [20](#)  
Mahindra, K.C. [33](#), [41](#)  
Mahmood, Mir Maqbool [25](#)  
mainland China [111](#), [134](#), [138](#), [165](#), [170](#)  
Malhotra, Inder [168](#)  
Mandal, Kalyan Sankar [89](#)  
Manshardt, Clifford [90](#)  
Mao Zedong [85](#), [111](#), [124](#), [134](#), [136](#), [143](#), [153](#), [163](#), [167](#), [170–171](#)  
March of Time (MOT) [25](#)  
Marshall, George C. [5](#)  
Masani, Minoo [65](#), [70](#), [94–95](#), [98](#), [135](#), [137](#), [168](#)  
Masani, R.P. [3](#)  
Mathai, M.O. [36–37](#)  
Mathew, C.P. [36](#)  
Matsuda, Takeshi [80](#)  
Mayer, Albert [59](#), [60](#)  
Mayling Sung Scholarship [29](#)  
McCormick, Thomas J. [9](#), [15](#)

McGee, Gale William [125](#)  
McGill, Ralph [24](#)  
McMahon, Robert J. [9](#), [109](#)  
Meals for Millions [100](#)  
Meherally, Yosuf [65](#)  
Mehta, Asoka [51](#), [58](#), [62](#), [65](#), [70](#), [136](#)  
Menon, K.P.S. [148](#)  
Merrell, George [88](#), [113](#)  
Merrill-Palmer Foundation [90](#)  
Michener, James [108](#)  
Military Air Transport Service (MATS) [117](#)  
military logistic base [11](#), [18](#)  
minerals [64](#), [109–110](#)  
*Minot News* (newspaper) [140](#)  
Misamari [17](#)  
mixed economy [50](#), [53](#)  
Mohanbari [22](#)  
Molesworth, George Noble [19](#), [21](#)  
Montefiore Hospital [166](#)  
Morgenthau, Henry Jr. [40](#)  
Mudaliar, Ramaswami [26](#)  
Mukherjee, Aditya [10](#)  
Mukherjee, Mithi [155](#)  
Mukherjee, Mridula [10](#)  
Mullik, B.N. [164–165](#)  
multipurpose river valley development (MPRVD) [51](#)  
Munshi, K.M. [98](#)  
Murray, Wallace [41](#)  
Muzumdar, Haridas T. [30](#)

Nagy, Ferenc [94–95](#)  
Naidu, Leilamani [99](#)  
Namboodiripad, E.M.S. [71](#)  
Naoroji, K.A.D. [33](#)  
Narain, Shriman [56](#)  
NASA [121](#)  
*Nation, The* (magazine) [22](#)  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) [109](#), [148](#)  
National Committee for India's Independence (NCII) [30](#)  
National Council of Churches [109](#)  
National Extension Service [61](#)  
National Planning Committee [54](#)  
Negri, Antonio [51](#)  
Nehru, B.K. [141–142](#), [166–167](#), [169](#)  
Nehru, Jawaharlal [3](#), [4](#), [10](#), [17](#), [23](#), [27](#), [29–32](#), [36–37](#)  
*Nehru the Rising Star of India* (Singh) [30](#)  
Nehruvian [10](#), [55](#), [73](#)  
neutralism [94–95](#), [109](#), [149](#), [155](#), [157](#), [169](#)  
Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) [150](#)

New Deal [11](#), [50](#), [51](#), [55](#), [65](#), [67](#), [68](#); elite [71](#); New Dealers [56](#), [69](#); *see also* elite networks; Indian elite

*New Republic, The* (magazine) [22](#), [31](#), [54](#), [102](#), [166](#)

*Newsweek* (magazine) [24](#)

*New York Herald* (newspaper) [24](#)

*New York Herald Tribune* (newspaper) [123](#), [158](#)

Nkrumah, Kwame [159](#)

non-alignment [1](#), [9](#), [12](#), [112](#), [133](#), [143](#), [163](#), [170](#); concept of [116](#); in the last leg of Eisenhower [159](#)–[160](#); Nehru's policy of [155](#); an offshoot of [156](#)

non-communist neutrals [12](#), [158](#)

Norman, Dorothy [109](#)

Noronha, George [94](#)–[95](#)

North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) [92](#)

North Korea [149](#)–[150](#)

nuclear cooperation [119](#)–[120](#)

Nuffield Foundation [84](#)

O'Brian, B.P.T. [24](#)

Office of Economic Warfare (OEI) [8](#), [29](#), [48](#)

Office of Strategic Services (OSS) [7](#), [18](#), [21](#), [28](#)–[29](#), [32](#)–[33](#), [36](#), [60](#)–[61](#), [79](#), [89](#), [134](#)

Office of War Intelligence (OWI) [22](#), [28](#), [150](#)

'Open Door' policy [165](#)

Pacific Relations Conference [29](#)

Pacific War [17](#), [35](#)

Pandit, Vijayalakshmi [17](#), [29](#)–[30](#), [33](#), [91](#), [97](#), [111](#), [136](#), [147](#), [153](#)–[154](#), [161](#), [165](#)

Panikkar, K.M. [25](#)–[26](#), [137](#), [149](#), [152](#)

Parmar, Inderjeet [80](#), [92](#), [102](#), [105](#)

Patel, H.M. [110](#)

Patil, S.K. [122](#), [166](#)

Patnaik, Biju [167](#)

Patnaik, Prabhat [56](#)–[57](#)

Peace Corps [53](#), [61](#)–[62](#), [71](#), [80](#), [138](#)

Pearl Harbour attack [26](#)

Pearson, Drew [23](#), [24](#), [31](#)–[33](#), [35](#)

Pearson, Lester [99](#)

Peel, R.T. [134](#)

PEN conference [98](#)

Perkins, Frances [34](#)

philanthropy [79](#), [80](#), [102](#)

Pillai, N.R. [96](#)

'Planned Parenthood Movement' [100](#)

'Point Four Program' [120](#)

Pope Pius [124](#)

postcolonial [10](#), [49](#), [80](#), [102](#), [167](#)

postcolonial India [1](#)–[2](#), [17](#), [40](#), [50](#), [71](#), [83](#), [101](#), [115](#)–[116](#), [171](#)

Prasad, Vijay [72](#)

Premchand, Roychand & Sons [82](#)

Progressive Writer's Association (PWA) [31](#)

progressivism [51](#), [71](#), [166](#)

propaganda: anti-British [33](#); anti-communist [93–94](#), [96](#); anti-India [96](#); black [79](#); British [34](#), [38](#); ‘counterblast’ to American [57](#); examples of relentless [115](#); experience of [61](#); machine in America [16](#), [25–26](#); manufacturers of [80](#); negative [31](#); recent years [82](#); Red [157](#)

Psychological Board Meeting [164](#)

Public Law 480 (PL-480) [85](#), [87](#), [89](#), [90](#), [124](#), [158](#)

Qadir, Altaf [33](#)

Quebec Conference [6](#)

Radhakrishnan, S. [83](#), [92](#)

Rai, Lala Lajpat [82](#)

Rajagopalachari, C. [8](#), [27](#), [47](#)

Rajan, Sundara V. [55](#)

Rakove, Robert [159–160](#)

Ramakrishna Vedanta Society [53](#)

Raman, T.A. [27](#), [134](#)

Ramgarh [18](#), [36](#), [65](#)

*Ramparts* (magazine) [98](#)

Ranga, N.G. [95](#), [137](#)

Rao, B. Shiva [30](#), [168](#), [169](#)

Rau, B.N. [148–150](#), [168](#)

Rau, Santha R. [150](#)

Rau, Sir Benegal [150](#)

Ray, Satyajit [20](#), [44](#)

reciprocal aid [39](#)

Red Cross [21](#), [37](#), [83](#), [101](#)

Reddick, Olive I. [89](#)

‘Reforms Brochure’ [25](#)

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) [38](#), [40](#)

‘Reverse Peace Corps’ [62](#)

Riedel, Bruce [133](#)

Rinchen, S.T. [138](#)

Robeson, Paul [30](#)

Rockefeller Foundation [59](#), [80–81](#), [83–84](#), [88](#), [91](#), [100](#)

Rockefeller International Health Board [82](#)

Rolo, Charles [27](#)

Romulo, Carlos P. [27](#)

Roosevelt, Franklin D. [6–8](#), [17](#), [21](#), [24](#), [28](#), [31–35](#), [50](#), [65](#), [110](#), [134](#)

Roosevelt, Theodore [51](#), [59](#)

Rose, Leo E. [92](#)

Rosinger, Lawrence K. [7](#)

Ross, Edgar F. [116](#)

Rotter, Andrew J. [10](#)

Roy, B.C. [7](#), [85](#), [87](#), [104](#)

Roy, M.N. [56](#), [67](#)

Royal Institute of International Affairs [26](#)

rural [50](#), [53](#), [55](#), [59–62](#), [71](#), [101](#)

Russell, Bertrand [66](#)

Sablier, Edouard [139](#)



*Sacramento Bee* (newspaper) [123](#)  
 Saheb, Jam [152](#)  
 Salter, Arthur [54](#)  
 Sanger, Margaret [100](#)  
 Sarabhai, Vikram [121](#)  
*Saturday Evening Post* (newspaper) [122](#)  
 Scott-Smith, Giles [80](#)  
*Seattle Post-Intelligencer* (newspaper) [27](#)  
 Security Council (SC) [3](#), [111](#), [132](#), [148](#), [153](#), [155](#), [156](#), [160](#)  
 Sen, Boshi [23](#)  
 Sen, Khagendra N. [54](#)  
 Sen Gupta, Bhabani [10](#)  
 Sengupta, K.C. [96](#)  
 Sepoy Mutiny [2](#)  
 Setalvad, M.C. [97](#)  
 Seventh Day Adventists Mission in India [100](#)  
 Sharm El Sheikh [116](#)  
 Sheean, Vincent [30](#), [52](#), [110](#)  
 Shridharan, Krishnalal [30](#)  
 Shriver, Robert Sargent [61–62](#)  
 silver [4](#), [17](#), [30–31](#), [40–41](#), [82](#)  
 Silver, Abba Hillel [31](#)  
 Silverman, Sydney [30](#)  
 Simla Conference [7](#), [14](#)  
 Sinclair, Gregg [88](#)  
 Sinclair, Upton [31](#)  
 Sind [20](#); minister of [100](#)

Singh, Anup [30–31](#), [33](#), [148](#), [150](#)  
 Singh, Govind Narayan [138](#)  
 Singh, J.J. [30–31](#), [33](#), [138](#)  
 Singh, Kirpal [90](#)  
 Sino-Soviet split [12](#), [144](#), [147](#), [153](#), [159](#), [161](#), [163–164](#), [170](#)  
 Smith, Marian [23](#)  
 Snow, Edgar [23](#)  
 socialist/socialistic [1](#), [5](#), [11](#), [51](#), [53](#), [56](#), [64–66](#), [69](#), [70–71](#), [76](#), [111](#), [122](#), [133](#), [167](#)  
 Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) [115](#), [141](#)  
*Spartanburg* (S.C.) *Herald* (newspaper) [139](#)  
 Special Operations Executive (SOE) [28](#)  
*Spokesman-Review, The* (newspaper) [140](#)  
*Statesman, The* (newspaper) [18](#)  
*Steel Architect* (ship) [119](#)  
 Steele, A.T. [23](#), [134](#)  
 Stevenson, William [137](#)  
 Stewart, James L. [94](#)  
 Stilwell, Joseph Warren [17–18](#), [35–36](#)  
 Stilwell road [18](#)  
*St. Louis Post Dispatch* (newspaper) [123](#)  
 Straight, Dorothy [22](#)  
 strategic compulsions [2](#), [11](#)

Strauss, Manny [61](#)  
structural dominance [10](#)  
Sudaresan, N. [26](#)  
Suez crisis [115](#)  
Sunderland, J.T. [82](#)  
Super Constellation aircraft [117](#)  
*Swadhinata* (newspaper) [88](#)  
Swaminathan, T. [61](#)  
Swatantra party [98](#)  
Swerling, Simon [8](#)

Tagore, Rabindranath [23](#), [68](#)  
Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) [88](#), [90](#)  
Tata, Jamsetji Nusserwanji [7](#), [18](#), [81](#), [33](#), [81–82](#)  
Taylor, A.P.J. [163](#)  
Taylor, Maxwell D. [140](#)  
Technical Cooperation Mission (TCM) [62](#), [89](#), [119–120](#)  
Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) [11](#), [50–52](#), [57–58](#), [61](#), [71](#), [83](#)  
Thimayya, K.S. [140](#)  
Thomas, Norman [30](#)  
Tibet [11](#), [23](#), [115](#), [126](#), [133](#), [155](#), [160](#), [171–172](#); covert operations in [117](#); *see also* CIA  
Tibetan: business in India [138](#); Cabinet [152](#); cause [133–134](#), [136–138](#); Foundation [135](#); revolt [66](#), [135](#); self-determination [143](#)  
*Tibet Mirror* (newspaper) [136](#)  
*Tiger Rag* (newspaper) [34](#)  
*Time* (magazine) [19](#), [20](#), [22](#), [24](#), [69](#), [112](#), [139](#), [157](#)  
*Times-Picayune* (newspaper) [139](#)  
Timmons, E.L. [90](#)  
Tito, Josip B. [124](#), [139](#), [156](#), [162–164](#), [170](#)  
Tolstoy, Ilia [134](#)  
transfer of power [2](#), [7](#), [17](#)  
Trikamdas, Purshottam [137](#), [152–153](#)  
Trombay [122](#), [125](#)  
Trone, Solomon [56](#)  
Truman Doctrine [53](#), [72](#), [191](#)  
Truman, Harry S [9](#), [30](#), [53](#), [120](#), [149](#)  
Tuinga, Vijiya [25](#)

United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) [148](#)  
United States Information Services (USIS) [28](#)  
United States Military Observer Group [118](#)  
*Unity* (magazine) [22](#)  
University Grants Commission [83](#), [91](#)  
Upadhyaya, Deendayal [56](#)  
US Agency for International Development (USAID) [120](#)  
US Army [18–22](#), [24](#), [51](#), [59](#), [60](#), [118](#), [134](#), [140](#)  
US Educational Foundation in India (USEFI) [89](#)  
US Navy Hydrographic Office [121](#)

*Vanishing Empire* (Lal) [34](#)

Villard, Oswald Garrison [30](#)  
Visvesvaraya, M. [54](#)  
Vivekananda, Swami [23](#), [81](#)  
Voorduin, W.L. [57](#)

Wadhvani, Hemandas R. [100](#)  
Wainwright, A. Martin [9](#), [15](#)  
Waite, Sumner [22](#)  
Waldorf-Astoria Hotel [29](#)  
Wallace, Henry [34](#)  
Walsh, Richard [30](#)  
Walska, Ganna [133](#)  
*War without Violence* (Shridharni) [30](#)  
Washbrook, David [2](#)  
‘Washington Merry-Go-Round’ [33](#), [35](#)  
Watumull Foundation [88](#)  
Watumull, Gobindram J. [88](#)  
Wavell, Archibald [17](#)  
Wells, Summer [29](#)  
Westinghouse Electric [8](#)  
Westinghouse, George [81](#)  
*What Does Gandhi Want?* (Raman) [27](#)  
‘White Lama’ [133](#)  
White Paper on *United States Relations with China* [114](#)  
White, Walter [109](#)  
Whitney, William C. [22](#), [45](#), [81](#), [83](#)  
Willkie, Wendell K. [4](#), [34](#)  
Wilson, Robert [113](#)  
Wilson, Woodrow [51](#)  
Wofford, Harris [61](#)  
Workers Party of America [52](#)  
World Bank [4](#), [79](#), [121–125](#), [158](#)  
Wrench, Evelyn [29](#)

Yangtze Valley Authority [52](#)  
*Yank, The* (newspaper) [18](#), [24](#)  
Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) [59](#), [109](#)  
Yugoslavia [156](#), [162](#)  
Zadkar, W.B. [117](#)

 Cover.jpg